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Title:  
**Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies**

Editor:  
New Media Center\_kuda.org

These book is published on the occasion of the "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" exhibitions held in Serbia and Montenegro.  
Novi Sad, Museum of Contemporary Art, 24 May - 3 June 2005.  
Belgrade, Museum of Contemporary Art, 4 - 10 June 2005.  
Production of the exhibition: New Media Center\_kuda.org, Novi Sad, Austrian Cultural Forum Belgrade

Translations:  
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Design:  
**kuda.org**

**Lithography & Print:**  
Daniel Print, Novi Sad

# Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies

Oliver Ressler



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www.revolver-books.de

ISBN 3-86588-123-8



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The commune is not about reforming  
participants in this cooperation.

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## Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies

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## **Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies**

A project by Oliver Ressler

After the loss of a counter-model for capitalism – which socialism, in its real, existing form had presented until its collapse – alternative concepts for economic and social development face hard times at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the industrial nations, broadly discussed are only those “alternatives” that do not question the existing power relations of the capitalist system and representative democracies. Other socio-economic approaches are labeled utopian, devalued, and excluded from serious discussion if even considered at all.

The thematic installation, “Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies,” focuses on diverse concepts and models for alternative economies and societies, which all share a rejection of the capitalist system of rule. An interview was carried out for each concept. Interview partners include economists, political scientists, authors, and historians. From these interviews, a video in English 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 (USA) and “Anarchist Consensual Democracy” from Ralf Burnicki (D). Marge Piercy (USA) presents the feminist-anarchist utopias of her social fantasies, and the underground author p.m. (CH), the ideas of his concept “bolo’bolo”.

Other videos focus on certain principles that might be of importance when discussing alternative economics and societies: Nancy Folbre (USA) speaks about “Caring Labor,” Christoph Spehr (D) about “Free Cooperation” and John Holloway (MEX/GB) about his ideas of how to “Change the World Without Taking Power.”

As interesting historical models, Todor Kuljić (SCG), thematizes workers’ self-management in Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s, Salomé Moltó (E) talks about the workers’ collectives during the Spanish Civil War (1936-38), and Alain Dalotet (F) discusses the Paris Commune of 1871.

Chosen from each of these eleven videos 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 and thereby provides a kind of orientation within this non-hierarchically arranged pool of videos. These videos offer stimulus and suggestions for contemplating social alternatives and possibilities for action.

The whole exhibition project started in Ljubljana in 2003 with five videos. Meanwhile, the installation has grown to include eleven videos with a total length of almost five hours. The project is ongoing. Further economic and social concepts will be added continually in the coming years.

The installation "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" was/will be realized with in the following exhibitions:

- Galerija Škuc, Ljubljana** (SI)  
30.10. – 23.11.03 ("Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies")
- Espace Forde, Geneve** (CH)  
06. – 19.12.03 ("There is no Alternative")
- Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg** (D)  
08. – 16.01.04 ("Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies")
- Transmediale.04, Berlin** (D)  
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")
- Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Mali Salon, Rijeka** (HR)  
04. – 12.03.05 ("Alternativne Ekonomije, Alternativna Društva")  
\* Photography at the page no. 3 and 4 is the illustration of this exhibition.
- Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center, Istanbul** (TR)  
29.04. – 21.05.05 ("An Ideal Society Creates Itself")
- Kuda.org – New Media Center, / Museum of Contemporary Art, Novi Sad** (SCG)  
24.05. – 01.06.05 ("Alternativne Ekonomije, Alternativna Društva")
- Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, Salon, Belgrade** (SCG)  
04.06. – 10.06.05 ("Alternativne Ekonomije, Alternativna Društva")
- Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe** (D)  
08.07. – Nov. 05 ("Critical Societies")
- Miroquesada Garland Gallery, Lima** (PE)  
11.08. – 04.09.05 ("9<sup>th</sup> international Festival of Video/Arte/Electrónica")

Information on upcoming exhibitions at [www.ressler.at](http://www.ressler.at)

## There Must Be an Alternative

Art and culture have always been, directly or indirectly, a reflection of societal processes, while the artistic avant-garde of the 20<sup>th</sup> century acted as the ideological framework for revolutionary movements. The arts used the position of medium and represented society's possibilities for achieving a utopian system. In many respects, these utopian ideas in the 20<sup>th</sup> century represented an alternative to capitalism as a societal and economic system.

In the arts of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, realism and socialist realism influenced the expansion of awareness about class differences, focusing on the lower levels of society and originating from their class and human emancipation. If we are aware of the fact that the painting and the literature of the era were the contemporary media (i.e. radio, television and the Internet), then it is understood the influence which their content at the time with its societal impact could have had. It is interesting, that during the same period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that there were two opposing artistic principles: *l'art pour l'art* – art for art's sake), which represented artistically self-referential autonomy and was the product of the excess of free time in the organization of capitalist labor and *realism or socialist realism* which displayed an interest in societal realities and rejected the idea of art for its own sake. Over time, the art market incorporated both elements, removed their contextual frameworks and turned them into marketable goods, so that today a work of realism from Honoré Daumier or Gustave Courbet are worth millions of dollars. In other words, the market of the art world assigned an exclusively monetary value and today they are contextually sterile. The history of art as it is known today represents a construct and more importantly the context of art itself has inhibited the content and message, which constituted realism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the avant-garde of the 20<sup>th</sup>. They are presented as esthetic phenomena or intellectual exhibitionism, which are today placed within the total corpus of the affective economy.

The exhibition "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" represents art interested in societal practices which, with minor esthetic interventions, tells the story of possible utopian strategies. On the one hand, the clear utopian plans contained in the exhibition represent the voice of socially conscious art, while on the other hand, art as a traditional discipline offers an alibi for utopian plans to be represented with legitimacy. The lack of trust in utopian theories in today's society is to such an extent that utopian social theories are in the position to be struggling for the status of just an alternative. As at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, art is representing a framework in which utopian theories can be demonstrated, i.e. a place where fiction achieves legitimacy and receives an attention.

In the situation where the issues in Serbia are dominantly national, whose goals are abstract and unattainable, and that being the case they are also frustrated, the citizens of Serbia are recovering from the trauma of national abstractions and actual wars. They are recovering from the isolation of the 1990's and gigantic state projects, and are slow-

ly turning inwards, calculating what has been left behind from those great state projects. With the help of the wars, capital moved into the possession of the nouveau riche, with the support of society itself. Some still consider this to have been necessary, some have come to their senses, and everyone together is waiting for that wealth to be redistributed. After this great turmoil, it is time for collective solidarity for individual to take the place of the individual victim for collective.

May 2005.  
kuda.org

## The Enclosure of Societal Changes

Kristian Lukić

The collapse of the state welfare system in the west and real (true) socialism in the east, left behind a dominant neo-liberal capitalistic model of societal and economic organization. Currently, dominance has been claimed by a Hobbesian view of the world in which the autonomous liberal subject prevails over the community and society, the old utopian idea of equality.

### Enclosure<sup>(1)</sup> in the Ex-Yugoslavia

The introduction to capitalism in the republics of the former Yugoslavia passed in a surprisingly effective manner. In the examples of the republics of the former Yugoslavia, which were racked with war (with the exception of Slovenia) we see a trend towards the fast distribution of national wealth. Property in the former Yugoslavia was held predominantly by the society or state, with only a small percentage being held privately. At the beginning of the 1990's and in a very short time, the public wealth of 20 million people was, with the plebiscite of the population, put into the hands of around 200 people. This means that the transition has not only started, but already has been completed signifying the end of the original accumulation of capital. Differing from the west, where the transition to neo-liberal capitalism in the 1970's and 80's was carried out alongside social unrest and migrations, the transition in the Balkans was carried out alongside genocide and ethnic cleansing.

The period in which the states and societies of the Balkan are now experiencing is not a period of transition, but a period of adaptation to the transition through state (or corporate) pseudo-social interventions with the aim of relieving the trauma of genocide and ethnic cleansing – the Yugoslav transition to capitalism. In the redistribution of societal wealth, new capitalists – tycoons – carefully give a percentage of this former state (and currently their own) wealth to society so that society can biologically survive, for which the society is grateful to them. At the same time, these impoverished societies are turning towards violent, populist movements in which violence, induced by social problems, is channeled through violence against other societal groups<sup>(2)</sup>. In extreme cases, some sectors of society turn towards these tycoons themselves and in this way become pillars of this violence<sup>(3)</sup>. This is the situation in which, with certain differences from case to case, the societies of the former Yugoslavia can be found.

### Private Intellectual Property – “Enclosure” of the Mind

The concept of private property became dominant after the collapse of state welfare and true socialism. Private property during the transition was obtained from state or socie-

tal ownership. However, production today, to a great extent, is based on societal communications and networks, services and a communal language, which to a lesser degree depends on material production and more on the societal relations themselves and services in the process of this production. According to Negri and Hardt<sup>(4)</sup>, today the concept of private property is meaningless, because the community and communal work in networks contribute to the production of more than ever in history. However, even if it is conceptually meaningless, property and ownership in information capitalism shows itself in a more abstract for which is called intellectual property.

In order to “enclose” intellectual property, a law is necessary which will legalize this “enclosure”. Today, lawyers have a more difficult task than their fore bearers at the end of the middle ages, when communal property began to be enclosed and privatized. Then they were able to certify or not, through arbitration, the violence of those who enclosed concrete parcels of land which were easily identified through size, type and quality. Today, with so-called intellectual property, lawyers define which part of or if the entire idea, thought, witticism, song or creation is unique and in that way protected, i.e. enclosed. This would work in a situation where communications between people did not exist and when intellectual production was truly unique, but this is not the case. Since people have been able to communicate with abstract symbols, there has been the free exchange of ideas as well.

In a situation when the new proletariat (a concept which is in the index of forbidden terms within the neo-liberal capitalistic movement) has the task of production and the service of communications and social interaction, alienation from production (i.e. alienation from communication) appears as a consequence. Although producing communication, the subject actually is alienated from communication (their own production) and as a result appear: an almost total loss of the meaning of labor union activities due to the dispersion of connected production units (as opposed to the factory floor, electronic networks maintain physical distance), and a reduction in the awareness and motivation for the betterment of the subject's own position due to the disappearance of the rigid, modernistic production hierarchy. This hierarchy could easily be identified and homogenized into demands of dissatisfaction. Also, this hierarchy has been replaced by illusory horizontalities of networked production processes.

In the new economy, art and culture, as a part of the entertainment industry, represent an important economic factor. In the art world, societal involvement in art represents an important part of the contemporary art market<sup>(5)</sup>. When it becomes a part of the market, art that is socially aware becomes an integral part of the logic of the market; the market to the societal potentials to the market are reversely proportional. When the market is subjected to law, then it is prone to hyper-production and inflation and with this, a decrease in demand. Therefore, through managing the logic of the market, we have greater or lesser demand with societal change, which is conditioned by larger or smaller supply.

How to, in this situation, socially-aware art and total societal engagement in societal change, avoid wild market anomalies: inflation, hyper-production, deficit of production, market crashes...? Due to the fact that the JIT<sup>(6)</sup> principle of postindustrial production in which case the difference between supply and demand will be zero and where the regulation of the market of ideas regulate the market of societal changes? No, however, societal engagement, theory and implementation will be extracted from the logic of the markets, a supply and demand of ideas which are imposed on informatic capitalism and the regime of intellectual property. Will we soon have a copyright on the idea of societal change or a patent on an original approach to societal change, an olympics of societal and cultural theoreticians or artists activists<sup>(7)</sup> which will capitalize on their years of intellectual work?

(1) The term “enclosure” originates from the enclosure of private property (commons) in England in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries on the initiative of individuals. This represents the beginning of the original accumulation of capital.

(2) During the elections for President of the Republic of Serbia, the candidate of the extreme right wing Serbian Radical Party received 30.1% of the vote in the first round, and 45% in the second.

(3) During the same election cycle, the Serbian business tycoon Bogoljub Karić took third place with 19.3% of the vote.

(4) Negri/Hardt – Imperij 2003, Multimedijalni Institut, Zagreb

(5) The most recent examples are the exhibitions “Documenta” and “Venice Biennial” at which the theme of engaging art (mainly exhibitions) before the American presidential elections in 2004 in the major cities of the United States, especially in New York and California which would be critical of the policies of George Bush, art which could be called “election art”.

(6) *Just in Time* (JIT) is a set of techniques to improve the return on investment of a business by reducing in-process inventory and its associated costs. JIT causes dramatic improvements in a manufacturing organization's return on investment, quality, and efficiency. The technique was first adopted and publicized by Toyota Motor Corporation of Japan as part of its Toyota Production System (TPS) [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

(7) Informal / private talk with Armin Medosch, Tallin, Estonia, August 2004.

**Kristian Lukić** is a cultural worker and researcher. He is the founder of the “Eastwood” – *Real Time Strategy Group* (<http://www.eastwood-group.net>) and works as a program developer at New Media Center\_kuda.org, Novi Sad, Serbia and Montenegro.

## Utopia and Actuality

### The Chances of an Alternative

Brian Holmes

What are the chances of helping to set up an alternative economy, and with it, an alternative society, in our own lifetimes? That's the big question of Oliver Ressler's video series. Memory, the utopian imagination, and the great cultural "maybe" are not enough. What matters is the pragmatically possible. The truth of the apple is in the tasting.

The following will be a short exercise in the paradoxes of futurology. The point is to think about what's inexorably ahead. And the paradox is this: human beings are made in such a way that our thoughts and beliefs about the future can change it.

### Hypercapitalism

"There is no alternative", Margaret Thatcher used to say in the eighties, while creating the onrushing wave of neoliberalism. Oliver Ressler was confronted with that saying in December of 2003, when it was used as the title of an exhibition in Geneva that brought his videos on alternative economies together with the imposing maps of World Government developed by the French group Bureau d'Etudes. In response, he mounted another show a few months later in Graz, entitled "There Must Be an Alternative". But as a deeper response, in tune with all his previous work and with the times, he went to South America with Dario Azzellini to make a quite beautiful feature-length film called "Venezuela from Below" (67'; 2004). The film explores the country's poor neighborhoods and rural areas, but also its state-run oil company and its revolutionary redistribution policies, interviewing a wide range of figures in the attempt to understand how a charismatic military leader can become an effective channel for extremely diverse, highly self-conscious efforts to collectively exit from a disastrous situation.

Contemporary Venezuela illustrates exactly what is wrong with really-existing capitalism. A resource-rich country, it is the fifth-largest oil producer in the world. Nonetheless, the percentage of people living beneath the poverty line went from somewhere around 35% in the mid-seventies, to over 70% by the early nineties. A corrupt inner circle of oil managers, a transnational financial oligarchy and a shrinking middle- and upper-middle class lived on a par with US standards, while the rest of the population fled the countryside to founder into urban misery. In 1989 a hike in transportation fees sparked off an immense riot by the poor of Caracas, who could no longer bear the impossible deadlock of their daily lives. The death toll from the repression is unknown, but estimates range up to 3,000 individuals. At that point, what appears from a first-world perspective as a wildly optimistic statement became a simple and immediate reality. There had to be an alternative. It emerged as early as 1992, in the form of an attempted rising by a re-

form-oriented movement from the lower ranks of the military, led by Hugo Chávez Frías. This demonstration of a will to reverse the disastrous situation in the country gained enormous popularity both for the new leader and for the broader reform movement, making possible an electoral victory six years later, followed by the drafting of a new constitution. The increasingly leftist, redistributive and cooperativist policies of the new government set the stage for the innovative social process that Ressler recently went to document, and to learn something from.

What does Venezuela tell us about the chances to help set up an alternative economy in our lifetimes? First, that they concretely exist, at least on the edges of the world-system. Second, that there is a role for artists and intellectuals in helping to make those possibilities understood in the centers of accumulation. In effect, it is almost shocking how little comprehension there is of the Venezuelan process in the so-called "advanced" countries. How penetrating a critical mind do you have to possess, after the example of Chile in 1973, to realize that only an alternative movement which is able to arm a significant fraction of the population – and ideally, which is able to begin from the popular ranks of the army itself – can stand a chance in the face of the local oligarchy's capacity to stage paramilitary coups backed up by all the logistic, communicational and financial power of the United States? This is one of the things the film helps us grasp, by recounting the coup attempt that effectively took place in Caracas in 2002. Another is that so-called revolutionary movements, under current conditions, are far more diverse and self-contradictory than the old clichés would have it. The theme of an ongoing need for a "revolution within the revolution" – which echoes musically inside the film as it echoes throughout Venezuelan society – is perhaps the most important message that Ressler and Azzellini's work conveys.

It's obvious that the shocking degree of inequality generated by contemporary hypercapitalism will produce more situations of social transformation on the edges of the world-system. However, not all the processes of social change will be as familiar to Northerners as the more-or-less Marxist revolution of Venezuela, with its appeals to the Cuban model and its inspiring cooperativist innovations. How are the coming revolts and social transformations going to be understood, if they take place, for instance, in Muslim countries, or under the influence of other religious doctrines? The complex evolution of the Iranian revolution, and of its relations with the West, is the model here. There will be increasing possibilities in the years ahead for an active minority of open-minded people to serve as interfaces between the self-blinded Western societies – convinced of their legitimacy despite the destructive effects of their economic system – and far-away others who can no longer stand to live beneath the future that has been created for them. And the extent to which distant upheavals can be perceived as positive or necessary will affect the chances for alternative economies to emerge inside the centers of accumulation, or on their immediate fringes.

## European Scenarios

But how about the effects of hypercapitalism on the Old Continent? Must there be an alternative here? No one can ignore the techniques that have been developed for social control within the centers of accumulation. The chances for any sweeping process of change in this part of the world look slim. After all, a new constitution has already been drafted for the European Union – and it's neoliberal. Whether or not it is ratified by the member states (and there's some doubt about that now in France, as I write), the course that the transnational elites have set for the region is clear. It's a matter of maintaining competitive positions amidst the general race to the bottom that free-market trading on a world scale creates. This means that European industrial capital will constantly seek both to raise the level of plant automation, and to relocate basic manufacturing processes from the old heartlands toward the southern and eastern border regions, in search of cheaper labor and laxer environmental regulations. But it also means that the educated strata of the European populations will increasingly be groomed for highly sophisticated kinds of cultural-informational production, which can only be carried out (and consumed) at the upper echelons of the worldwide division of labor. Meanwhile, the underclass of the major cities – comprised both of immigrants, and of nationals who didn't get through the education system – will keep growing. But these two groups, immigrants and lower-class nationals, seem fated to neutralize each other, thanks to the development of neofascist movements that serve to legitimate the continuing exclusion of migrants from access to social rights. All these divides can only fuel mounting tensions. Whether on the edges of the EU where the classical forms of industrial exploitation are most intense, or at the urban frontiers between the classes where the inequalities are most glaring, the social conflicts will be managed like so many isolated pressure-cookers, with the national or central states intervening, economically or even militarily, whenever the boiling pot threatens to explode. Under such conditions, why even bother thinking about alternative economies, alternative societies?

The reason why is the tremendously open nature of social communication within the current paradigm. Control under the liberal model isn't personal, it's statistical. Rarely do they come knocking at your door at night. That kind of atmosphere isn't considered encouraging for the cultural-informational innovation that the economy depends on. Instead, complex balances are continuously monitored, thresholds of tolerability are continuously gauged. State intervention, whether it comes in the form of repression or of aid, is conceived as action on an environment, concerted action on a social tissue. The more neoliberalism inexorably advances, that is to say, the more the state disengages from any concern with the well-being of the entire population, the more the aim of this kind of intervention is simply to avoid spiraling cycles of violence. Such a conception of government is extremely cynical, for sure; but it leaves a great deal of leeway for divergent and dissident behavior, as long as violence is avoided. The rise of all kinds of postmodern activism in Europe over the past ten years has made this clear. The current perspectives for an alternative society involve the creation of experimental social formations within the interstices left open by the modes of social control under neoliberalism.

In effect, the current model of capitalist development leaves two wild cards within reach of those who don't agree. One is free time, including both unemployment and the relative freedom of the flexworker who has escaped direct surveillance by a boss; and the other is a generally high level of public education, permitting the uncontrolled development of complex discourses, as well as the operation (and hacking) of complex machines. The immediate attraction of this situation, for many, is the opportunity to engage in subversion: i.e. the tossing of semantic monkey-wrenches into the shallow and easily ridiculed systems of capitalist values. But one could also take a more long-term view. The kinds of dissident networks that have arisen over the last ten or even twenty years – bringing together, say, squatters, marginal figures from academia or the arts, formal NGOs, splinter unions, renegade technologists, innovative community organizations – could also be considered as vectors of a self-education process, able to cultivate forms of knowledge which are autonomous from both the market and the state. Already, these networks have been able to contribute significantly to the critique of neoliberal economic principles, and to the circulation of news from faraway lands like Venezuela. And the critical role that can be played by such transversal networks is likely to become even more apparent over the next ten or twenty years, as public education, cultural production and scientific research are increasingly cut back, functionalized and privatized, in the attempt to surmount one of the major contradictions of contemporary capitalism: free access to knowledge in a system which is increasingly based on its commodification.

Let us suppose, then, that the dissenting networks are going to continue growing. What will they achieve in our own lifetimes? Today, a workable set of alternative principles for the organization of the developed societies does not yet exist. If there is to be one, then it must emerge in the future. But the point is not to simply wait for a crisis of the economy, in hopes that disaster itself will provide the solution. What the experimental activist networks are doing now is *creating the problem in advance*: deliberately problematizing the dominant assumption that competition and hyper-individualism are the only basis for social relations. And this activist approach resurfaces among the contemporary utopians. When Christoph Spehr talks about free cooperation, when Nancy Folbre talks about caring labor, when John Holloway talks about changing the world without taking power, they are all proposing productive activities which question the dominant relations, not only through analysis and intellectual critique, but also through the very form and nature of the activity. One could say the same about all the most effective kinds of postmodern protest and dissent. The deepest form of subversion is this materialist way of thinking toward the future, of engaging with its unanswered questions. The foretaste of an alternative society, or the actuality of utopia, lies in the pursuit of such concrete experiments.

**Brian Holmes**, is an art critic, cultural theorist and activist, born in San Francisco and living in Paris for many years. Since the Carnival against Capital in the City of London in 1999, he has taken part in and written about many of the large demonstrations against corporate globalization around the world. At the same time, he has analyzed a variety of artistic and spectacular practices in order to characterize the new forms of capitalistic subjectivity (the flexible personality) and their alternatives. The results can be found in an anthology of essays, *Hieroglyphs of the Future* (Zagreb: Arkzin/WHW, 2003) and in the work presented at [www.u-tangente.org](http://www.u-tangente.org), a project created in common with the French cartographers Bureau d'Etudes.

## Performative Alternative Economics

Marina Gržinić

Oliver Ressler presents in his project "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" eleven ways of rethinking, conceptualizing and visualizing what is possible to be termed eleven models of alternative economics that also open a way of rethinking culture as a radical dispositive. Ressler's project is an important contribution in fleshing out a history of alternative economics that has also been suppressed and ignored, similarly to the models of alternative economics themselves. In fleshing out a possible history, indeed, as the work consists of eleven distinctive individuals who in "flesh and blood" narrate and conceptualize these alternative economics' practices, we face a political gesture within the field of representation to reclaim these "movements" and their historical potentials and to re-launch them into a possible new future.

Alternative Economics are about the labor movement, although they provide cultural elements for a productive counter-cultural platform. The project by Ressler situates alternative economics within a broader social and political arena that is not only embedded with class struggle and labor policy, but also has the capacity to transform multiple areas of life.

Why is this important? What is going on today in the process of global capitalist production is that life in itself is the primary source of global capitalism. Life is the most powerful labor force today. The mode of our submission to the capitalist machine is through precariousness, marginality, and the constant fear for our living standards and the contemporary (im)possibility to create and preserve fixed forms of labor. The precariousness of labor is connected with the precariousness of life, and is the central topic not only of contemporary biopolitics, but also of contemporary representational politics. Contemporary post-Fordian production processes are not "just" giving meaning to life, but so to speak, create and consume life itself.

It is clear that alternative economics were built upon alternative political convictions. Therefore it is not surprising that Ressler invokes the concept of alternative societies as a part of alternative economics; every demand to fight the past and the present of capitalist methods of production and its contemporary precarious form of labor and life is a political act.

There are important reasons for artists to display and constitute a possible, though fragmentary, history of alternative economics.

One reason is clearly political. We need to consider the possibility of forming alternative societies and this is possible around alternative economics in order to fight global

capitalism. Therefore we need to be able to identify alternative economic systems among countless small utopias and ideas that also strive to build economic solidarity and democratic forces. Ressler focuses his project on comparative studies, and tries to document the history of the movement of alternative economies, but also Ressler fights that this “movement” regains back its potential.

The question is also how “Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies,” affects contemporary art. Why this sudden interest for economics in contemporary art and culture, and also what is to be done in the field of contemporary art in relation to economics?

Today art productions fit the levels of production and consumption within the liberal global capitalist society perfectly; it is because of its highly developed consumerist tendencies that transforms global capitalist societies into “supermarket communities”. Art objects and works are seen simply as the next generation of goods in the capitalist supermarket economy. Nothing escapes capital: capital produces goods and also subjectivities. To say this means that is necessary to perceive a change in the relation between contemporary art and economics. Global capitalism entered openly, in a visible and disgusting way, into the field of contemporary art. The art market is the most important regulator of esthetics and trends in the art field. It also chooses and redirects taste, trends, controls the circulation of curators to be selected for organizing of big art events and works tightly as well with the global multinational capitalist companies investing in and sponsoring art and other cultural projects. The final result is a special linkage of money, institutions and critical-theoretical writings that today present themselves even more than ever as a “civilizational kinship”. This kinship (which again comes from the vocabulary of biotechnology) presents itself in the “world” as the most natural and internal process of art and culture in the capitalist First World, and moreover this “civilizational kinship” is today overcoming cultural borders in order to become the password of the day in political affairs (us against them; the war to preserve civilization, etc.). If we keep in mind the idea of this effective capital investment (theory-money-art market) in a single work of art, we have to acknowledge the importance of the art-critique-theory “machine” in its background, which obsessively works on providing genealogical and historical power to a unique artwork style and aesthetics.

The alternatives are clear, though in the end they always work together. I can present them as follows: should we adopt the Zapatista ski mask as our emblem in order to fight the (art) market, tightly embedded with the capitalist economy, or should we instead try to display a politics of representation that presents utopian, maybe outmoded, but powerful ways of building different forms of economic platforms in the world. Ressler decided at the present moment for the second way, for establishing a fragmented, but powerful history of alternative economics.

The other reason is representational. It is necessary to develop a vision of a worldwide movement of alternative economies that takes into account the very different conditions

of very different models of economies. Just let's think for a moment of ex-Yugoslavia's self-management third way into socialism that found its logic in the 1960s movement of the non-aligned countries and that precisely in these days are trying to make a comeback on the international stage of global politics. It is necessary to understand how these conditions affect the form and content of activities for building alternative economies. Clearly ex-Yugoslavia's self-management and Western world models of alternative economies will have different characteristics. Certainly a good way to begin exploring these questions is by looking at specific experiences of alternative economics and visualizing them.

Economic contradictions are central for today's world. The constantly changing meaning of the specific position is highly dependent upon ideas of the possible constitution of history of such alternative economies. Making sure that the emancipatory historical experiences of such alternatives are not forgotten and changing them in a source of open community project. Ressler's proposal is that we are to go beyond seeing the economic only and solely as a signifier of exploitation and racism, it is possible to rethink alternative economics also as activist's platforms within contemporary societies. Therefore to undertake such an effort, as it is in the case of the project by Oliver Ressler, means to give a form to a history of alternative economics. Or, better to say means to make an effort to restore alternative economics and their proper place in the history of capitalism and in the history of alternative societies.

Alternative economics as presented by Ressler capture the creation of labor unions, the formation of working class militancy, and also as it is possible to see in some of the specific presented models that they indeed ameliorate working class conditions. Alternative economics have to do a lot with the distribution of wealth that means to raise the question as to who owns control over the Internet, transportation, public education, legal system, the human genome, etc, owns the structures of exercising power in different societies as well. Taking advantage of public goods – like roads, transportation, markets – and public investments that belong to all, is presented in most of the cases as a personal initiative, hiding therefore the structural bases of capitalist hegemony and expropriation. Making such relations of private ownerships of public goods that are internal to capitalist economics are opening up questions of direct power relations: as who controls economics has the power over society in his or her hands as well. One sixth of the world's population that is based in the former Western Europe and West America controls almost 80 percent of all world resources. This opens up the horrifying relations of a small percentage of people having control over huge resources of wealth within the global capitalist machine, transforming therefore the question from individual power to a kind of structural inequality and form of capitalist private ownership of natural resources and goods.

Ressler presents alternative economics as a mixture of different positions. On one side the alternatives are presented through the work of people with an academic background

who elaborated a scientific concept or model, and on the other hand ideas are coming from an activist background. Ressler through his chosen speakers asserts that alternative economics were vital platforms in the last century's social and political history, proposing alternatives to the capitalist system. He displays in his project through the eleven positions a movement engaged against the status quo toward rethinking possibilities that oppose global capitalism and struggle to democratize social life, from the economic to the cultural spheres, from private to public politics.

Alternative economics as a paradigm shows the potential to organize the labor movement and to run societies without only and solely complete expropriation from the capitalist system. In some aspects alternative economics allow citizens to become conscious of their power as workers, defending their immediate interests, and giving contexts to revolutionize society as a whole. It is also true that until now not many projects of such a type as this one by Ressler reflected and connected the significance of alternative economics. The project charts the emergence of comparative politics of representations on the topic.

The project can be seen as developing three distinctive ways for developing models of thinking and acting within the economic field. It is dealing with ideas within the democratic, Marxist and anarchist tradition. Marxist models are working within and beyond the totalitarian regimes, the democratic ideas are based on all sorts of free-market policies and the anarchists' positions, also in collaboration with feminism, imagine a society independent from capitalism.

Alternative economics also presents the articulation of the communitarian elements in capitalism, as well as the utopian perspectives that emerged around the period of the New Left. A special path is constituted in this genealogy of alternatives with recuperating democratic visions against capitalism that are the result of class contradictions within the capitalist system itself. The project works in-between working class interests and utopian visions that seek to reconstruct society along radically democratic and communitarian lines.

In the project "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" another obsession of contemporary representational politics also shows up clearly: performative politics. The obsession with communication, speech and language is at the core of most art projects today. Communication is at the base of production processes as well. The process of work is established in a process of verbal exchange; communication is of crucial importance within production processes. This involves, according to Toni Negri, something completely different from "Habermas's reconciliation of communication." Negri argues that it is contemporary communication that clearly demonstrates the failed dialectics between permanently unstable labor and the lives of the precariat and fixed capital.

This is why the eleven positions in Ressler's project that rearticulates eleven alternative economies speak incessantly. Speech is not only a mode of transmitting commands and

instructions within labor processes, but also a process of signification. Language is, as Paolo Virno says, not only an artifact of real life that mediates our relationship with nature, but also part of our biological matrix, co-substantial and specific to our human nature. Language is the biological organ that is in-between the space of thought and political action.

Oliver Ressler's ongoing project is a challenging project of a direct politicization of the field of art with displaying topics crucial for contemporary art today, but left out by the capitalist institutions of art in order to more fully exploit creativity and imagination in art.

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**Marina Gržinić** holds a Ph.D. in philosophy and works as a researcher at the Institute of Philosophy at the ZRC SAZU (Scientific and Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Art) in Ljubljana. She is Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna/The Post-Conceptual Art Practices Class. She also works as a freelance media theorist, art critic, and curator. In collaboration with Aina Šmid, Gržinić has been involved in video art since 1982. She publishes extensively. [margrz@zrc-sazu.si](mailto:margrz@zrc-sazu.si)

## Appeal for Non-Hierarchic, Self-Determined, Social and Economic Alternatives

Interview with Oliver Ressler  
on the exhibition "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" in Serbia

**kuda.org:** *There are many arguments and critiques of the capitalist economy in general and its influences on social reality (and "absorption of social imagination"), on politics and the concept of "multicultural liberal democracy". What is the position that you stand for when you discuss and criticize capitalism in relation to the subject of the installation "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies"?*

**O.R.:** Well, capitalism completely dominates and defines the conditions under which people live nowadays, which means poverty and exploitation for the majority of people on earth. I believe that under capitalism a "normal", balanced condition does not exist. Capitalism needs permanent expansion, new markets, such as genetic engineering, patents on genes, the privatization of water or of all those social services, which have been provided by the state until recently. Politicians, corporations and corporate media use the construct of "globalization" to present these changes as necessary, natural and inevitable, and not as an efficient long-term strategy for the redistribution of wealth in favor of capital it is. As capitalism without expansion does not seem to be possible, I don't agree with critics who argue for a reformation of capitalism, mainly a re-regulation of markets. And even if re-regulation would really somehow work economically on a global level, it would not be a structure I would fight for. We have been living in these extreme hierarchic capitalist structures for so long; it's already getting boring and time to consider possibilities for less hierarchic, self-determined social and economic alternatives.

**kuda.org:** *How did it come that you focused on alternatives to capitalism within your artwork and realized the installation "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies"?*

**O.R.:** In the late 1990s I realized a major project related to economy, an exhibition focusing on analysis and criticism of the most influential global players in capitalism, the transnational corporations. I spent several weeks on their web pages doing research, reading the annual reports and learning about their strategies as to how to present economic globalization and the deregulation of markets as something which is a natural process and absolutely positive for everybody. Half a year after the first presentation of this project, "The Global 500", in 1999 in Seattle this so-called counter-globalization movement came into focus of attention. I was very attracted by the dynamic and the non-hierarchic organization and filmed two videos in the following years focusing on this resistance movement. Since 2003 I spent most of my time and energy working on the ongoing project "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies", which does not only analyze and criticize the present conditions, but goes one step further with its focus on social and economic alternatives.

**kuda.org:** *The exhibition deals with the ideas, attempts and possible models of alternative economics and alternative social organization. To what extent are these ideas and models a functioning alternative to capitalism and to what extent a utopia?*

**O.R.:** All of the eleven concepts and models for which I carried out interviews so far have a negation of the capitalist system in common. Whether some concepts are considered as scientific economic models and others as utopian is an interesting question in itself. Which aspects make one model scientific and another utopian? I would argue these categories are fluid. Marx and Engels' work was clearly utopian at the time it was written, but become reality after some decades when communist leaders tried to apply their economic theories to real life. Nowadays the notion "utopian" is often used to devalue certain strategies for change.

The central idea behind the project "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" is to present different models and concepts for alternatives, to give people who are interested ideas to find out how a future society might be structured and look like. The ideas in the exhibition should work as food for thought, as the basis for discussions, which are so necessary nowadays when strategies for alternatives are not clear. But it has to be clear that a desirable society should be realized and created by the people who live in it. A model, which prescribes and determines every aspect of this future society, cannot lead towards an ideal society. That's why the project does not focus on one alternative concept, but on several.

**kuda.org:** *What is the position of those alternative methods in relation to the extreme anarchistic strategies of opposing capitalism, which more often promotes deconstruction and abolition as the most effective approach – "to destroy what destroys us"?*

**O.R.:** Some of the concepts and models in "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" also focus on transitional strategies, how to move towards an alternative society. The interview partners are of course aware of the fact that it will be very difficult to achieve this new society on a larger level without powerful struggles from the grass roots. Considering the fact that these elites who are in power today would necessarily lose all their power, influence and wealth and would defend it for sure, it is impossible to imagine a systemic change taking place without any violence. But there is also violence imbedded in the structures of capitalism and is reproduced every day, so you cannot avoid it. All authors have different quite elaborated ideas through which structures capitalism might be replaced. Also the contemporary anarchist model presented in the project, the "Anarchist Consensual Democracy" by Ralf Burnicki is a detailed description of an egalitarian society. So this simple radical attitude to which you seem to refer to as "Smash Capitalism!" and not to focus on alternative social structures, which should replace those of capitalism, I cannot take seriously.

**kuda.org:** *In several of the interviews on different social concepts appeals for egalitarianism, solidarity, diversity and self-organizing can be found. Are there examples*

*of small-scale initiatives that worked and inspired the creation of larger communities based on these values?*

**O.R.:** As an example for a larger community which tries out different forms of self-governing and self-organization I would offer the Zapatistas in Chiapas, who developed an autonomy against the will and pressure of the Mexican state eleven years ago. The Zapatist communities organize and govern themselves on a grassroots basis. They introduced the so-called Good Government Junta as a kind of direct-democratic self-governing network. The Zapatistas organize their own schools, radio stations and medical care, they own property collectively, have their own local economy – of course at a very low level because Chiapas is an extremely poor rural area. So we should not glorify their economic and social situation, but at the same time recognize what they managed to make real. At least to some extent I think they succeed in not replacing one domination system with another but to break with systems of domination as a norm. A video on the Zapatistas is definitely one I will carry out in future in the framework of “Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies”.

**kuda.org:** *There is an interesting thought in one of the video interviews that says: “Capitalism exists not because we created it in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or in the 18<sup>th</sup> century... Capitalism exists today only because we created it today”. What are the manifestations of capitalism in today’s society? What are its “geographical imprints”, in the sense of the forms that it can take in the world’s most developed countries, as well as in the political and economic peripheries, such as Serbia?*

**O.R.:** The effects of capitalism are visible everywhere in the world, but take different forms in different areas in the world. I think Serbia or the former Yugoslavia is a good example how indebted states are being forced into economic globalization. This transformation process is organized through structural adjustment programs the indebted states have to implement, which deregulate and liberalize the national markets, open them for the large transnational corporations, which destroys many of the smaller local businesses after a while. The structural adjustment programs force states to dismantle their social security systems, to lay off employees in state industries, measurements that lead to the impoverishment of large parts of the population, which is so visible in Serbia and many other parts in the world.

The reason why I carried out an interview with John Holloway, whom you quoted in your question, lies in his extremely inspiring considerations about how revolution can be thought today. Holloway argues that history shows that transforming society through the state has failed, because the state itself is already a specific form of social relationship that arises with the development of capitalism. So he talks about changing the world without taking state power, describes revolution as a question rather than an answer, as a process of involving people in a movement of self-determination. Many of his ideas are related to the thinking of the Mexican Zapatistas, which also had some impact on

me when I developed the conceptual structure of the installation “Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies” as a non-hierarchically arranged pool of videos. “Asking we walk” is a central motto of the Zapatistas. The visitors in the exhibition are not provided with information as to which videos they should start watching at the exhibition. Visitors have to find their own way following the several meter long text quotations on the floors, which provide a kind of orientation and lead them to the corresponding videos. So visitors pick out videos according to their interests, which is a very important aspect of the installation, because I think it should also be the case in the society that people have a possibility to choose the structures that influence how they work and live.

**kuda.org:** *In one of the interviews, you said that you have always been politically active and particularly interested in political issues, but you realize your project as an artist. You also mentioned that what makes art interesting to you is the fact that “a lot of art institutions are still spaces where it is possible to thematize issues from perspectives that are not included in the discussions in major media”. Many art institutions are also part of capitalist based art market. Marina Gržinić says that behind the naturalness of artwork stands “a whole system of (theoretical, critical) investments and (not only and solely) money.” What is your position as an artist that is, in the end, active in such system, yet dealing with its essential problems?*

**O.R.:** I completely agree with Marina’s analysis. The question is what to do after acknowledging the fact that there is no “outside” of capitalism. It is no option for me to give up artistic practice and neglect the artistic field, which very often is a space where radical debate takes place. For me personally the central question is if it is still possible to achieve some positive effects through activities, which have their origin in the art field. And from my experiences I would not hesitate to answer this question with “yes.”

In the case of “Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies” the exhibition is a site for a social process of interrogation, and I see my role as an artist to organize and initiate such a process. Within the format of an art exhibition I try out modes of making information and knowledge accessible, which are very different from reading a book or seeing a film.

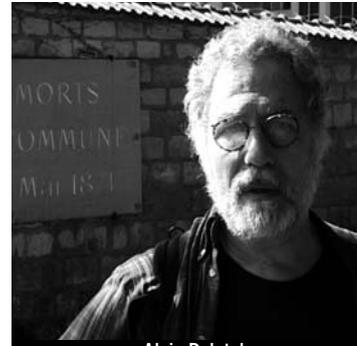
**kuda.org:** *You are using different kind of media to analyze the content and to send the message through. Video has a kind of special place among them, since many of your works are realized in video format. What is the position of using the Internet and new media within the subjects that you are dealing with? Do we still need to wait for the process of “democratization” of this media, as we witnessed the democratization of video in the sixties and the seventies? Is the conviction of transformation of civil disobedience into “electronic civil disobedience” a myth, a utopia?*

**O.R.:** I used video as part of installations since the mid-1990s and videos, which can be presented independent from exhibition spaces, since 2000. So video really became a

somehow dominant medium within my artistic practice. But I also use other media such as posters, billboards and light-works for public inner-city spaces, or I produce graphic inserts for print media or magazines. So my work is not primarily based on one certain medium, but more on certain issues that I am dealing with and trying to find formats and strategies to address a public with them. And similar to art production tools I also see a variety of valuable different resistance means I do not want to pit against each other. As the international counter-globalization movement has proven the activities of real bodies in the streets can still make sense under certain circumstances and can cause positive effects, such as the premature termination of the WTO conference in Seattle in 1999, which at least to some extent was caused through the ten-thousands of demonstrators who blocked the meetings of the WTO delegates in Seattle. On the other hand we can find examples that electronic civil disobedience can raise a lot of public awareness as well, such as the online demonstration against Lufthansa. As capital seeks to commercialize recently developed spaces such as the web, it is extremely important to use these spaces for dissent and to fight for our democratic rights for free speech and to demonstrate on these spaces.

**kuda.org:** *What is, in your opinion, the most significant effect or output in organizing such an event in Serbia and Montenegro, considering the local context? At least, what are your expectations?*

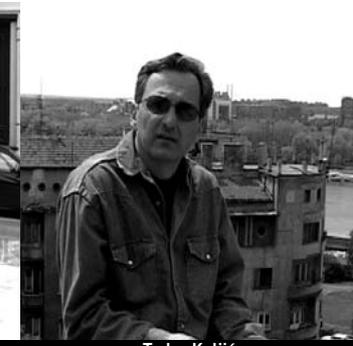
**O.R.:** An exhibition is a very specific format which is usually seen by those people who are somehow involved with the art scene or who are interested in the particular issues of the project. In some of the "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" presentations that took place in larger art exhibitions such as at the Transmediale.04 in Berlin or the Emoção Art.ficial II in Sao Paulo also a broader audience got a chance to see the installation. In any case it is a work in which people have to spend some time in order to profit from it, the total length of the eleven videos on which the ongoing project currently consists is almost five hours. But I am not only traveling around in the world to realize these exhibitions but also to get in touch with people through the exhibitions I would not have met otherwise. And these people sometimes have some special knowledge they share with me, give me important hints for possible future videos within the framework of the project. But what exactly happens at the site of an exhibition is never predictable. In Geneva the exhibition was realized at the time when the "World Summit on the Information Society" took place and got more or less occupied by Indymedia activists, who spent days in the space, watching and discussing the videos, and using the exhibition space for their meetings. So each exhibition is a unique experience, and I hope the exhibitions in Serbia in the context of extremely right wing politics and these incredibly fast economic transformation processes have the potential to provide interesting thoughts for some people.



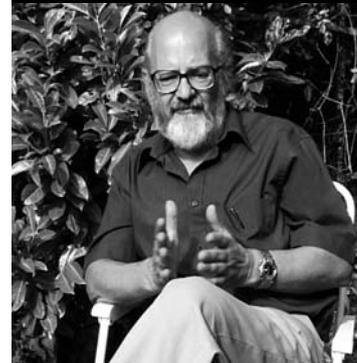
Alain Dalotel



Salomé Moltó



Todor Kuljić



Takis Fotopoulos



Michael Albert



Ralf Burnicki



p.m.



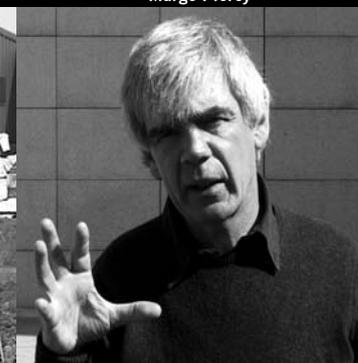
Marge Piercy



Nancy Folbre



Christoph Spehr



John Holloway

### The Paris Commune 1871

Alain Dalotel

One thing that must really be stressed is that the Paris Commune of 1871 is a direct democracy. And this particular direct democracy has nothing to do with participatory democracy. The Commune is not about reforming the public services, it's about changing society, not adapting it. In 1871, people want revolution and think they have the capacity to make it happen with guns and cannons.

Excerpt from a video realized in collaboration with Rebond pour la Commune, 25 min, recorded in Paris, France, 2004.

### Workers' Collectives during the Spanish Revolution

Salomé Moltó

No one was forced to join the collectives but everyone was eager to do so because it signified a higher income, your needs were covered and apart from that, if a system of that kind is afoot it is not a small percentage of the population which supports it but 99 percent of the nation.

Excerpt from a video, 22 min, recorded in Alcoy, Spain, 2004.

### Yugoslavia's Workers Self-Management

Todor Kuljić

But compared with the state of present Yugoslavia, for example, where a type of wild capitalism reigns, it was a relatively well-functioning democracy. The working class and the poor people had a type of sovereign right, which they do not have today. One cannot reject Yugoslavian self-management as a whole as totalitarianism.

Excerpt from a video, 23 min, recorded in Belgrade, Serbia, 2003.

### Inclusive Democracy

Takis Fotopoulos

[www.inclusivedemocracy.org](http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org)

The overall aim of the inclusive democracy project is to create a society in which people determine themselves, in which, in other words, the "demos", as it was the classical concept for the people, has overall control over the political sphere, the economic sphere and, the social sphere in general.

Excerpt from a video, 37 min, recorded in London, Great Britain, 2003.

### Participatory Economics

Michael Albert

[www.parecon.org](http://www.parecon.org)

The values of participatory economics are equity, solidarity, diversity and self-management. Equity refers to how much we get from our work. And the norm is that we should be remunerated for effort and sacrifice, not for property or power.

Excerpt from a video, 37 min, recorded in Woods Hole, USA, 2003.

### Anarchist Consensual Democracy

Ralf Burnicki

First, in an anarchist consensual democracy, affected persons would have the right to be consulted on decisions. Second, all persons who are disadvantaged by a decision would have

the right to veto in this decision-making process. This right allows them to nullify the decision so that discussion can begin again.

Excerpt from a video, 29 min, recorded in Bielefeld, Germany, 2005.

### bolo'bolo

p.m.

[www.bolo-bolo.org](http://www.bolo-bolo.org)

It would probably take longer to explain that the communism that I am talking about is not the one that I saw. It is easier to simply say I am for bolo'bolo, and then everyone starts to think of the things all over again, to re-think them.

Excerpt from a video, 22 min, recorded in Zurich, Switzerland, 2004.

### Utopian Feminist Visions

Marge Piercy

<http://archer-books.com/Piercy>

Most utopian novels that women have written are very different. They tend to be much looser, more anarchical societies. They tend to be very concerned that the daily work of society should be as prestigious as the jobs that are now loaded with rewards.

Excerpt from a video, 24 min, recorded on Cape Cod, USA, 2003.

### Caring Labor

Nancy Folbre

[www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~folbre/folbre](http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~folbre/folbre)

Caring Labor... whether we are coming out from a corporate capitalist point of view or from a socialist point of view, we have to recognize that there is this kind of labor that is different than other kinds, that is not as reducible to the logic of exchange or to the logic of central planning or bureaucratic administration.

Excerpt from a video, 20 min, recorded in Amherst, USA, 2003.

### Free Cooperation

Christoph Spehr

[www.outofthisworld.de/yeti](http://www.outofthisworld.de/yeti)

There are three aspects that have to be taken into account if you want to build a free cooperation. The first is that all rules in this cooperation can be questioned by everybody [...] The second [...] is that people can question and change these rules by using this primary material force of refusing to cooperate [...] And the third aspect [...] is that the price of not cooperating should be similar for all participants in this cooperation.

Excerpt from a video, 32 min, recorded in Bremen, Germany, 2003.

### Change the World Without Taking Power

John Holloway

There is simply something wrong with the whole idea of trying to transform society through the state. The failure to transform society through the state has to do with the nature of the state itself, that the state is not just a neutral institution but a specific form of social relations that arises with the development of capitalism.

Excerpt from a video, 23 min, recorded in Vienna, Austria, 2004.

All interviews were carried out by Oliver Ressler.

## Oliver Ressler's Biography

**Oliver Ressler** was born in 1970, lives and works in Vienna. Ressler is an artist who is doing projects on various socio-political themes. Since 1994 he has been concerned with theme specific exhibitions, projects in public space and videos on issues of racism, migration, genetic engineering, economics, forms of resistance and social alternatives.

Many of Ressler's works are realized as collaborations. The film "Venezuela from Below" (67 min, 2004) was realized with the writer Dario Azzellini and it focuses on the processes of self-organization by the true actors in the profound social transformation in Venezuela: the grassroots. Project "European Corrections Corporation" thematizes the phenomenon of prison privatization and it was realized as container-installation in public inner-city spaces in Wels, Graz and Munich in 2003/2004 with artist Martin Krenn. In the framework of the ongoing project "Boom!" from 2001, Oliver Ressler and the American artist David Thorne address central contradictions of globalized capitalism in the text works for various media. In 2005, Ressler focuses primarily on the continuation and production of new videos for the project "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies".

Ressler participated in group exhibitions, such as: "Making Things Public", ZKM, Karlsruhe, 2005; Prague Biennale 2, 2005; "fly utopia!", Transmediale.04, Berlin; "The Interventionists", MASS MoCA – Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004; "Emoção Art.ficial II", Itaicultural Institute, Sao Paulo, 2004; "Minority Report", Aarhus Festival of Contemporary Art 2004, Aarhus; "Banquete", Centre of Contemporary Art Palau de la Virreina of Barcelona, Conde Duque Cultural Centre, Madrid, 2003; "Attack!", Kunst-halle Wien, Vienna, 2003; "Empire/State: Artists Engaging Globalization", Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2002; "Exchange & Transform", Kunstverein München, Munich, 2002; "<hers>", steiris[:her:]bst, Graz, 2001.

Ressler curated the exhibition "There must be an alternative" in Forum Stadtpark, Graz at steiris[:her:]bst 2004.

He has also taken part in several film festivals in Europe and North America: Impakt Festival, Utrecht; Duisburger Filmwoche, Germany; Kasseler Dokumentarfilm - & Videofest, Germany; Résistances 2002, Foix, France; New York Int'l Independent Film & Video Festival and the "Contemporary film and video" series at Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

In 2002 his video "This is what democracy looks like!" won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize of the International Media Art Award of the ZKM.

More information at [www.ressler.at](http://www.ressler.at)

## kuda.org – social implications of new media

New Media Center kuda.org is an organization which brings together artists, theoreticians, media activists, researchers and the wider public in the field of Information and Communication Technologies. In this respect, kuda.org is dedicated to the research of new cultural relations, contemporary artistic practice, and social issues.

Kuda.org's work focuses on questions concerning the influence of the electronic media on society, on the creative use of new communication technologies, and on contemporary cultural and social policy. Some of the main issues include interpretation and analysis of the history and significance of the information society, the potential of information itself, and the diffusion of its influence on political, economic and cultural relationships in contemporary society.

The development of new communication technologies has brought about numerous changes in contemporary society, touching the political, social, and cultural realms. The Internet, processes of applying new technologies and new models of communication via the "networking" process and the development of critical thinking towards the above, have become part of our everyday lives. A large body of researchers, theoreticians, programmers, critics and media activists are devoted to the research and explanation of the global phenomena of our time and their consequences.

New Media Center kuda.org opens space for both cultural dialog and alternative methods of education and research. Social questions, media culture, new technologies art, and the Open Source and Free Software principle are areas in which kuda.org is engaged.

### **Programs:** **kuda.info / infocentar**

Provides information in the field of new media, contemporary art, social phenomena, research and education by means of a library, mediatheque and digital archive. In addition information is disseminated about cultural events, seminars, call for proposals (inter(nationally). For all visitors of kuda.org Internet is free as a free beer.

### **kuda.lounge / presentation and lectures**

Consists of lectures, workshops, talks, public presentations of artists, media activists, theorists, scientists and researchers. kuda.lounge is a place of active participatory dialog. From 2000 onwards over 100 events have been organised. The center boasts its own venue for public events and workshops (real time recording of programs, digital archiving and Internet uploading).

### **kuda.production / production and publishing**

Creates a matrix for non-profit artistic production in the field of new media and technologies, interdisciplinary research and experiment. In 2003 collaborations have been with a.o. Institute of New Cultural Technologies Public Netbase – Vienna, and with the Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade. kuda.org has organized the Serbian edition of the exhibition World-Information.Org. From 2004 onwards kuda.org offers free web space on the kuda server for artists, activists and the NGO sector.

## **“Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies”**

Author of the project: Oliver Ressler, Austria

Exhibitions in Serbia and Montenegro:

Novi Sad, Museum of Contemporary Art, 24 May – 3 June 2005.

Belgrade, Museum of Contemporary Art, 4 June – 10 June 2005.

Production of the exhibition:



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The project “Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies” received initial support as a grant from republicart ([www.republicart.net](http://www.republicart.net)) and the BKA section for the arts.