

New [B]Order

On the topography of the centre-periphery-complex in post-communist Eastern Europe, using the example of Belgrade

Project by meta-D.O.N.

Introduction

1989: the borders dissolve; the road is paved for freedom! Global capitalism has arrived. But which transformation processes were initialized here? What does it mean for the post-communist societies, if “*the East is no longer red?*” (Sloterdijk)

While the path is smoothed for goods to cross national borders, a new power order is materializing under the banner of economic integration. Old borders have dissolved, but simultaneously, new exclusion mechanisms have been created. The goal of the project is to display these new demarcation lines and borders, and to capture them cartographically on a *map*.

Traditional topographical approaches are insufficient for this purpose. Maps have always been the expression and registration of power relationships. This project makes a fundamental break from this specific conception of topography. *Maps* will become methods to localize borders and to render power constructs comprehensible and visible. The approach is not a progressive reproduction of social realities through the apparent authority of a faithful-to-reality realistic image, but rather “the map is open, it can be connected, dismantled and inverted in all its dimensions [...]. A map always refers to performance, while the copy always refers to a supposed competence.” (Deleuze/Guattari)

Project implementation

By means of a theoretical approach to the below-quoted theme blocs, specific indicators emerge which allow a measurement of the transformation processes and render the implicit borders visible on a map. This map will be linked to a semantic database (*SemaSpace*), which permits the user to create unexpected correlations with the parameters of the indicators and to render them visible and open for discussion. Complex semantic nets are visualized through SemaSpace, an interactive, three-dimensional diagram. A readable and browser searchable 3D data space with various media (image, sound data, URLs, full texts, etc), which are individually connected to nodes, will be displayed.

The user can penetrate and freely navigate the multilayer spaces of the map. Thus, new dimensions of information will be created in a space-time diversity, because “ultimately every diagram is intersocial and evolving. It never portrays a pre-existing world; it produces a new type of reality.” (Deleuze) The semantic network can be operated simultaneously from six console places that will be placed in an installation – the so called *control room*. The performative elements of the map can be accessed and projected by the semantic database installed on the console places.

The *control room* represents the suggestion of predictability and controllability of social spaces. Thus, it symbolizes the opposite to a fundamentally unstable or flowing reality, in which subjects and functions are constantly whirled together so that constant change occurs. All components of the project are designed with open source programmes, are licensed under *Creative Commons* and are freely accessible under www.OpenStreetMap.org. Hence, every user is enabled at all times to expand the project and to add new indicators and dimensions.

Indicators

New order in Eastern Europe: theoretical approach

The hegemony of the free market in Eastern Europe is especially displayed in the “levelling” of historical centres, which are increasingly being occupied by the symbolic forms of international corporations and their representative constructions.

These take the place of former collective myths, insignia and monuments of power, and reintegrate them pop culturally in the capitalist utilization logic. On the level of product consumption, reprivatization has circulated the illusion that material pleasures and desires have been raised to being a part of the societal imperative.

Does this imply that in the “centres of capitalism” – in the sense of a manifestation of materialist desire reproductions – the range of goods becomes an exchangeable pattern? The same shopping spaces, the same chains of stores, the same temples of desire satisfaction – and everything blurs in absolute indistinguishableness? Nevertheless, one must recall: “No space is innocent!”

With the capitalist overload of greed-dynamic systems, boundaries and a disintegration of periphery social spaces in inner city centres become visible. Through the reciprocal conditions and perpetuation of the relationship between centre and periphery, the interpretative predominance of desire can be perceived in the centres only. Can borders be identified in which the periphery penetrates the centre? Is the view always focused on the centre even under the condition of the strongest economic marginalization?

Hence, the metastatic penetration of social spaces of desire satisfaction by the centre referenced symbolic forms should be measured artistically in order to create indicators for social disintegration. The resulting centre-periphery-complex will be measured using quantitative and qualitative indicators, where in a first step the ambivalent consequences of the symbolic and material exchange between centre and periphery will be in focus.

I. Indicator: Symbolic penetration

The location of the financially strongest corporation symbolizes the apparently "absolute" centre. This indicator covers the frequency and distribution density of the symbolic representation of this corporation. The penetration of public space by corporate identities will be entered into the map as symbol clusters. Therefore, it measures and renders visible the length and degree of subjective capitalism in the sense of competition.

II. Indicator: Graffiti – Subversive signs of the periphery?

Graffiti will firstly be seen as a subversive symbol, a spontaneous intervention or release directed against the generalizing tendency of capitalist levelling. Thus, a content analysis should provide information on the themes of the Graffiti. In a second step, the strategies used in product sales and marketing instruments of corporations will be investigated. Deeper lying levels of meaning will be correlated in a factor analysis in order to verify whether consumer symbols adapt subversive content.

III. Indicator: Symbols of the previous systems

Former insignia and monuments of the communist narrative will be recorded on the map. How were the old symbols of power replaced, where did they end up and in what functions are they now being used? By layering of a-parallel snapshots, this change will be rendered visible.

IV. Indicator: Black market

Plagiarism and the black market are the central factors of this indicator. The black market exists in a dependent relationship with the interpretative predominance of the centre and simultaneously develops an emancipative movement through parasitic product reproduction. The production level is separated from the interpretative predominance of the centre. The aim is to find the "point of no return", when the centre loses control over illegal reproduction. Where does one meet the first black marketer? What are the routes of the mobile salesmen offering their reproductions for sale? What is the distance between advertisements for current cinema films and the points of sale of their illegal copies?

About

meta-D.O.N. – association for cultural substitution services

The association meta-D.O.N. pursues the aim of promoting music, art, and science projects in order to create and enlarge cultural and artistic spaces.

Christian Hofer

Born in 1978 – studies of Sociology at the University of Vienna. Has worked in the fields of digital audio production (e.g. for the programme „Smuc“ at Orange 94.0, Free radio station Vienna). Music producer for „Helden der Gier“ and „AFFKRAFT“. He is a DJ and hosts the club "Kokolore" at Venster (Vienna) and "Klub Affenkraft".

Michael Gerhard Kraft

Born in 1977. Degrees in Economics, Philosophy and Sociology. PhD in the history of economic thought and theory of science. Research and study scholarships in Manchester (UK) and Berlin. Various projects for the Mauthausen Memorial Archives (KZ Gedenkstätte Mauthausen). Social scientist, part-time performer, musician ("AFFKRAFT") and DJ. He runs "Klub Affenkraft" (Vienna, Zurich, Hildesheim). Various scientific publications in different fields (cultural history of neoliberalism, education and society, social philosophy, etc). Together with Sebastian Lasinger he is currently working on a publication on the subversive nature and potential of art in the 21st century.

Sebastian Lasinger

Born in 1977. Degree in Sociology, Johannes Kepler University (Linz, Austria) and studies in Theory of Conflict and Human Rights, Universidad Javeriana de Cali (Colombia). Diploma thesis on the potential of transnational civil society campaigns, supervised by Dr. Franz Nuscheler. He was coordinator of Art and Culture of the 2nd Austrian Social Forum in Linz. In 2007, he took part in the exhibition Un/Fair Trade (curators: Peter Weibel, Günther Holler-Schuster) at the Steirischer Herbst Art Festival. 2008 he was working with the Danish artist Kristian von Hornsleth on the Hornsleth Arms Investment Corporation Project. In 2009 he was invited at the "Subversive Fair" a project by Social Impact within the frame of Linz 2009 European Capital of Culture. Currently he works with the artist group Wochenklausur on the project "Brunnenpassage" He is DJ and runs "Klub Affenkraft" (Vienna, Zurich, Hildesheim) Together with Michael Gerhard Kraft he is working on a publication on the subversive nature and potential of art in the 21st century.

Ulrike Schrabberger

Born in 1982 – studies of Design and Photography in Linz and Vilnius. She is currently working in Munich in the fields of illustration and graphic design. On her website www.larika.at one can get a glimpse of an idea of her multifaceted work, which ranges from illustration, graphic design to photography and stage design.

Alexander Vojvoda

Born in 1981 – degree in Sociology at Johannes Kepler University Linz. During studies co – founder and chief editor of CampusRadio Linz, consultant for cultural affairs at the Johannes Kepler University Linz and free lancer at the Institute for Culture at the Johannes Kepler University Linz. From 1998 onwards editor and since 2008 media training coordinator at Radio FRO. Member of the board of the *Association of Free Radios Austria* (VFRÖ) and supporter of the campaign „Speak out against discrimination“ of the Council of Europe. Member of “Meta – D.O.N.” and collaborator to “Klub Affenkraft” (Vienna, Zurich, Hildesheim). Currently he is working on an exhibition dealing with the feuilleton of daily newspapers in Austria.

Hannes Weingartner

Born in 1979 – Studies of Computer Sciences and New Media at the Technical University Vienna. Currently working in the field of software engineering in the field of mobile applications in Vienna. Resident visual artist at „Klub Affenkraft“, Vienna. Films: „Einer und die Zeit“ (2002), „Freiraum“ (2004), „Ludowika“ (2004) and „Land der zwei Sonnen“ (2005).