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EUroland and the economy of the borderline

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The MoneyNations project was first held in Zurich's Shedhalle from October 23 to December 13, 1998. It focused on the cultural and economic arguments used to support the tightening of western Europe's border policies as applied to Central and southeastern Europe, which is accompanied by an increase in racially motivated discrimination against non-EUropeans. This year, MoneyNations will be continued at Vienna's Kunsthalle Exnergasse from October 20 to November 11, 2000. A new edition of MoneyNationsTV will be developed by an expanded group of EU and non-EU producers for the EuroVision2000 project in Prague, Bologna and Brussels. The various contributions from the first events held in Zurich have been published on the Web at www.moneynations.ch and in "The Correspondent," which is in English. More information about EuroVision2000 is available at www.eurovision2000.net.

EUroland

Criticism of a Eurocentric mechanism of knowledge and power has multiplied since the 1990s, including in the German-speaking art and culture scene. In contrast to the North/South discussion, the relationship between East and West, due to its historical and

political differences, is more contradictory and has rarely been the subject of scientific research. The political systems which were formerly enemies, whose Cold War propaganda machines permitted portrayal of the other side as an enemy without qualification, are now national units defined by their level of westernization and advancing capitalization. Reporters for the Western media are still quite fond of the "Wild East," Mafia-like organizations, bankrupt national governments and other states of emergency. And while a united Europe shuts out the East through its laws concerning borders and foreigners, and multinational corporations and investors have increasingly turned their attention to Central and southeastern Europe as a source of extremely cheap labor, attempts are being made at the cultural level to connect with a historical continuity of an eastern and western European identity. The expansion of the EU to eastern Europe is inevitably accelerating this process, which is shifting to the countries of Central Europe themselves.

Traditionally, European identity has been formed in contrast to "others" such as the USA, Japan, Asia and the Middle East. This European identity was based in particular on the uniqueness of the region's cultural tradition with which the culture of the others was disparaged. Eastward expansion of the EU's border or its entry into NATO, which is at present being offered eastern European countries, is again based on the exclusiveness of this "old" Europe and its western center, while the reality in the former East Bloc and the countries located in the southern hemisphere is being blocked out. Culture has been given a central and extremely important role in the processes of exclusion. The fusion of nation-states into a "single Europe" has created new paradigms for a new identity of all of Europe and excludes those who do not live up to this paradigm of economic efficiency. Categorizations and claims of

cultural difference are not only being expressed in the media; they are also becoming part of exhibitions of eastern European art, such as in the construction of authenticity (Sammlung Ludwig) and claims of a new internationalism (Manifesta), which block out the borderline productions of Fortress Europe and the role of eastern Europe as the global standard for low wages. These contradictions are the theme of the MoneyNations project.

MoneyNations questions, and questioned, whether joint criticism of Eurocentrism by producers of culture from both post-communist and Western countries can provide a valuable basis for discussion. When we talk about leftist politics, what concepts are being assumed, which culture do we mean when discussing culture work? Power structures can no longer be explained conclusively on the basis of a binary structure with the West as the center and the East as the periphery. Apparently, new centers have formed in Central and eastern Europe, and racism and sexism are global rather than Western phenomena.
Therefore, when providing a retort to the concept of hegemony inherent to Eurocentrism without being able to assume that culture workers from western and eastern Europe use different concepts in their criticism, can a common praxis be developed which is not as culturally imperialistic as Western capitalism itself?

Access

MoneyNations attempted to pose these questions on various levels, such as methodically, as we do not cling to the binary pair of periphery = East and center = West. The intention is to express migrant perspectives on their local experiences in various Central and eastern European realities within a communicative exchange. The first round of this exchange, which took place at MN1 through a network of correspondents, began two years ago before

the project's initial presentation in the form of my personal contact with GŸlsŸn Karamustafa (Istanbul), Marion Baruch (Milan), Jochen Becker (Berlin), Edit Andras (Budapest) and Peter Spillmann (Zurich). These first five correspondents and I were asked to integrate others into the project and suggest potential participants. The intention was to organize the project in such a way that the new participants did not serve as mere representatives of non-Western views in a Western art institution. They were to be active participants and have an equal say in how the content was communicated. The original function of the institution (Shedhalle, Zurich) was adapted for this process, making it a producer of a cultural exchange process.

The focus chosen for the project was active discussion and networking involving producers of culture, theoreticians and media activists from eastern and western European contexts and their representation within the art context as a social and symbolic space. The results of this exchange include video productions, photographic works, installations, theoretical texts and narrations. These contributions, which were exhibited at the Shedhalle, will be shown at a number of venues in eastern and western Europe and used as a basis for discussions. The project was launched at the Shedhalle with a three-day congress on "Economy of the Border" and a workshop with media producers from Ex-Yugoslavia.

MoneyNations began by asking how we can develop a cultural praxis which plays an active role in the transformation processes now in progress. Culture was dealt with not as something which is unalterable or a rigid process, but as a discursive field. It provides us with certain identities and roles, as was the case with Cold War propaganda. The project, rather than confirming these identities and roles, questioned and deconstructed them.
In the ethnicization of the other and the construction of alterity,

images and linguistic constructions employed by the media, in literature, at exhibitions, etc. play an equally important role as those for which politics serves as a vehicle, as even politics without representation is unthinkable. And one can observe that even anti-racist campaigns tend to depict migrants as victims who have been criminalized for the purpose of achieving certain political goals. Descriptions which equate them with victims create the status of a reductionist subject which can be exploited by the media again and again, as was seen with refugees from Kosovo. At the same time, the discussion is shifted from jus soli or the recognition of human rights for migrants to the position of constant "exception." The legality of one's own citizenship is recognized without question. In contrast, the contributions made by actors from various fields of knowledge to the MoneyNations project illustrate the possibility of establishing both new contexts for production and international forms of communication and resistance which transcend such stigmatizations as "French," "Bulgarian," "German," "Romanian," "Turkish," etc.

Another theme central to MoneyNations was the area of consumption: Appropriation of cultural symbols, ideas and materials and their integration into the other culture paves the way for creation of new local communities which offer new roles, and impose new compulsions to fill them. MoneyNations was intended to reevaluate certain economies which are described as "informal" in contrast to the formal Western economic systems. The specific social and economic conditions in post-communist countries was the focus of the "Economy of the Border" congress. Since 1989, markets with a new form of retail trade have arisen in all southern and Central European countries. Their significance for these economic systems is difficult if not impossible to define, and for them, the West has taken on a peripheral role. GŸlsŸn

Karamustafa, an artist from Istanbul, reported that her home has become the central marketplace for southeastern Europe in the past 11 years. In Sofia, a market for pirated CDs has developed which, although it is underground, still represents an important part of the viable economy. In a number of ways, these trade forms undermine Western values as expressed in trademark protection and treaties and agreements, including those dealing with borders. At the same time, they offer a way to make a living during the ongoing transformation processes in the post-communist countries. Participants dealt with both these contradictory developments and the issue of how we can discuss borders and the formation of borders without delegating the problems in Germany or Switzerland to eastern Europeans, or describing borders defined by the West as their own. We then agreed to pursue the topic of borders from the perspective of subversion and resistance. The "suitcase economy" became a synonym for our own exchanges within the framework of the project.

Some of the previous correspondents will by replaced by new contacts at the follow-up event in Vienna. This will take place in the context of the current political situation in Austria, which has strengthened the demand for contemporary political concepts, and we intend to react in the form of MoneyNations2. The shift to the right in both EU and non-EU countries will provide a context in which various critical approaches ranging from theory to forms of political action and cultural strategies will be discussed and shared at the congress held at the Kunsthalle Exnergasse in Vienna. The perspective employed in MoneyNations1 (southeastern European network) will undergo a geographic shift, and the focus in Vienna will be racist politics within the EU, the current forms of resistance being employed in Europe and the normalization processes in countries which will join the Union.

MoneyNations
www.moneynations.ch
Exhibition, webzine, video and magazine project, workshop and congress

Participants (at present):
Mogniss Abdahlla (Paris), A-Clip (Berlin), Absolutno (Novi Sad), Mehmet Akiol (Zurich), Edit Andras (Budapest), Joerg Arendt (Bonn), Zeigam Azizov (London), Simone Bader (Vienna), Marion Baruch / Name Diffusion (Paris/Milan), Paula di Bello / Marco Biraghi (Milan), Jochen Becker (Berlin), Marica Bender / RadioZid (Sarajevo), Luchezar Boyadjiev (Sofia), Iara Boubnova (Sofia), Fritz Burschel / 'Kein Mensch ist illegal' (FFM, Berlin), Bureau de Pointage (Brussels), Madjiguene Ciss (Paris/Dakar), Jana Cvikova / ASPEKT (Bratislava), Eva Danzl Suarez / FIZ (Zurich), Dana Diminescu (Paris), Helmut Dietrich (FFM, Berlin), Dogfilm (Berlin), Micz Flor (Berlin), Melita Gabric / Blaz Habjan / Martine Anderfuhren (Ljubljana/Geneva), Encarnacion Rodriguez Gueterrez (Hannover), Hex TV (Cologne), Berta Jottar (New York), K3000 (Zurich), GŸlsŸn Karamustafa (Istanbul), Martin Krenn (Vienna), Beat Leuthard (Basle), Level ltd. (Zurich), Geert Lovink (Amsterdam), Media Aid for Ex-Yugoslavia (Zurich), Marton Oblath (Budapest), Ayse ...ncŸ (Istanbul), Marion von Osten (Berlin/Zurich), Drazen Pantic / B92 (Belgrade), Marco Pelhian / Ljudmilla (Ljubljana), Susanna Perin (Zurich/Rome), Lia & Dan Perjovschi (Bucharest), Pascal Petignat / Peter Riedlinger (Zurich/Vienna), Sascha Roesler (Zurich), Polish Social Council (Berlin), Jayce Salloum (Canada/Lebanon), Jo Schmeisser / Marth (Vienna), Kalin Serapionov (Sofia), Oliver Sertic / Attak (Zagreb), Natalie Seitz / Markus Jans (Lucerne), Nedko Solakov (Sofia), Peter Spillmann (ZŸrich), Deep Europe /

V2_East-Syndicate, Mina Vuletic / B92 (Belgrade), Videodoks (Turin), Dr. Anna Wessely (Budapest), Jeta Xharra / Mediaproject (Pristina), Zelimir Zilnik / Terra Film (Novi Sad), etc.