

Alternative Economy Cultures (alt.econ.cult) Seminar

Friday 3rd April, PixelACHE Helsinki Festival 2009

<http://2009.pixelache.ac/festival/programme/alternative-economy-cultures/>

Speakers biographies & statements

Michael Albert (US): 'Participatory Economics (parecon)'

<http://www.zmag.org/znet/topics/parecon>

Michael Albert is one of the United States' leading authorities on political economy, U.S. economic policies, and the media. A veteran writer/activist, he currently works with ZCom/Znet.

Schooled in the new left and anti-Viet Nam war movements and an activist ever since, Albert primarily focuses on matters of movement-building, strategy and vision, creating alternative media, and developing and advocating the economic vision called participatory economics ("Parecon" for short). Albert has authored sixteen books — including *Parecon: Life After Capitalism* (Verso) and *Thought Dreams: Radical Theory for the 21st Century* (Arbeiter Rin) as well as his classics *Looking Forward* (with Robin Hahnel) and *Stop the Killing Train*, both available from South End Press. He recently penned a memoir, *Remembering Tomorrow: From the SDS to Life After Capitalism*. In *Remembering Tomorrow*, Albert charts his own trajectory as the child of a middle class suburban New York family to his political awakening on a Boston campus as revolution and dissent seized the nation. His story is one of swimming against the tide, when it turned against the iconoclasm and tumult of the Sixties, and continuing on with his part in the project for economic justice and social change.

Albert has extensive organizing experience, has written hundreds of articles, and has spoken at venues all over the world and throughout the United States. His ideas are both accessible and provocative. His perspective combines attention to race, gender, power, and class, and pursues equity, diversity, solidarity, and self-management. He speaks on movement matters, anti-war, globalization, media, and particularly economic vision for the future.

Participatory Economics (Parecon)

"Participatory economics, often abbreviated parecon, is a proposed economic system that uses participatory decision-making as an economic mechanism to guide the production, consumption and allocation of resources in a given society. Proposed as an alternative to contemporary capitalist market economies and also an alternative to centrally planned socialism or coordinatorism, it is described as 'an anarchistic economic vision', and it could be considered a form of socialism as under parecon, the means of production are owned by the workers. It emerged from the work of activist and political theorist Michael Albert and of radical economist Robin Hahnel, beginning in the 1980s and 1990s.

The underlying values that parecon seeks to implement are equity, solidarity, diversity, workers' self-management and efficiency. (Efficiency here means accomplishing goals without wasting valued assets.) It proposes to attain these ends mainly through the following principles and institutions: Workers' and consumers' councils utilizing self-managerial methods for decision making; Balanced job complexes; Remuneration according to effort and sacrifice; Participatory planning."

Quoted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Participatory_economics

Michel Bauwens (BE/TH): 'Peer to Peer Economies and the Revolution in Values'

<http://p2pfoundation.net/>

Michel Bauwens is an active writer, researcher and conference speaker on the subject of technology, culture and business innovation. He is the founder of the Foundation for Peer-to-Peer Alternatives and works in collaboration with a global group of researchers in the exploration of peer production, governance, and property. He has been an analyst for the United States Information Agency, knowledge manager for British Petroleum, eBusiness Strategy Manager for Belgacom, as well as an internet entrepreneur in his home country of Belgium. He has co-produced the 3-hour TV documentary Technocalyps with Frank Theys, and co-edited the two-volume book on anthropology of digital society with Salvino Salvaggio. Michel is currently Primavera Research Fellow at the University of Amsterdam and external expert at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (2008). Michel currently lives in Bangkok, Thailand. In February 2009, he joined Dhurakij Pundit University's International College as Lecturer, assisting with the development of the Asian Foresight Institute.

Peer to Peer Economies and the Revolution in Values

A long-standing historical problem with social alternatives has been that none have them have been more productive than the for-profit alternatives, or at least not, in the context of the existing balance of power. However, a combination of technical and social trends has produced a historically novel situation that challenges this state of affairs. Internet-based technical infrastructures have made it possible to scale small-group dynamics to the level of global coordination of highly complex social artefacts that produce common value for self-aggregating peer producers; deep changes in ways of being, knowing and feeling have produced a new set of open and free, participatory, and commons-oriented paradigms that are changing the structure of desire of emerging generations. Remarkably, the new set of social practices, i.e. peer production, peer governance, and peer property, are both strengthening the current political economy, (much as emerging capitalism did for the flagging feudal system from the 16th century onwards), but also undermining it through a systemic crisis of value, while also pointing to post-capitalist alternatives that may want day supplant the core of the current system. This lecture by the founder of the P2P Foundation will examine the impact of peer production as a challenge to the current political economy and present different scenarios for the future of social change, especially in the context of the current meltdown.

Tapani Köppä (FI): 'Remarks on rural co-operation in Finland'

<http://www.helsinki.fi/ruralia/>

Tapani Köppä, 66, D pol sc (sociology) is responsible research director of coop study group at the Mikkeli unit of Ruralia Institute, University of Helsinki (UH). He has acted as professor of sociology at the University of Kuopio 2005-2007. Previously he was acting director of the Institute for Co-operative Studies, UH (1991-2001). Doctor Köppä has long experience in local R&D project activities and entrepreneurship training programmes of the university. He has participated actively in international networks of co-operative studies, social economy and rural sociology. Current themes of his research include social economy and its role in solving socio-economic problems at local and global settings, social innovations in entrepreneurship and welfare services and their social impact, social economy as a basis for new forms of entrepreneurship and co-operation in rural areas and future studies connected with the evolution of economic co-operation. Before his university career, Dr. Köppä was working at the market and economic policy research institutes of the Finnish co-operative central organisation Finncoop Pellervo.

Remarks on rural co-operation in Finland

Historically, informal co-operative practices have a long tradition in rural Finland, extending from mutual help in vocational activities to the needs of everyday life, caring of roads, herding cattle, owning jointly village meeting places, using agricultural machinery, sharing catch or bag etc. The early modern social economy in the Finnish countryside was based and built on these formally or informally organised activities of the village civil society. The establishment and rapid diffusion of rural co-operatives in the beginning of the 20th century was made possible by the simultaneous and parallel interests of numerous peasants' associations and other rural civil society activities, important for the Finnish identity and nation building of that time.

Donations, volunteer work and talkoot (Finnish name for mutual self-help of community people) are still practical resources in the development of rural local communities. Many charitable organisations and non-profit associations, running economically considerable operations, are very familiar with the rules of the untypical markets with low or zero profitability demands. To recognise their activities as part of a larger whole may, however, open the eyes to wider networks and co-operation with other organisations. In Finland, village activity movement has been the most important activator of local, regional and national networks of civil society actors in rural development. New dimensions for these networks are initiatives to develop rural resources to enterprise-type organisations. This may bring essential added value economically for the promotion of rural development contract -type programmes. Networks of the social economy are important ways to exchange experiences and disseminate innovative practices of creating solutions to entrepreneurial activities and employment.

Oliver Ressler (AT): 'Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies'

<http://www.ressler.at/>

Oliver Ressler (born 1970 in Austria) organizes exhibitions, projects in the public space and videos which try to blur the boundaries between art and activism. His ongoing project "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" was produced in 21 cities around the world, including solo-exhibitions at Galerija Skuc, Ljubljana, 2003; Kunstraum Lueneburg, Germany, 2004; Centro Cultural Conde Duque, MediaLabMadrid, Madrid, 2004; Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center, Istanbul, 2005 and the Museum of Contemporary Art Belgrade, 2005. A publication on the project was published by the Wyspa Institute of Art, Gdansk in 2007. Ressler is currently preparing the multi-channel video installation "What Is Democracy?".

Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies: a project by Oliver Ressler

The exhibition series, "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 (U.S.A.) and "Anarchist Consensual Democracy" from Ralf Burnicki (D). Chaia Heller (U.S.A.) presents "Libertarian Municipalism", Paul Cockshott (GB) "Towards a New Socialism", Heinz Dieterich (MX) "The Socialism of the 21st Century", Marge Piercy (U.S.A.) 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 (U.S.A.) speaks about "Caring Labor," Christoph Spehr (D) about "Free Cooperation", Maria Mies (D) about the subsistence perspective and John Holloway (MX/IE) about his ideas of how to "Change the World Without Taking Power." The whole exhibition project started in Ljubljana in 2003 with five videos. Meanwhile, the installation has grown to include 16 videos and was presented in 21 exhibitions all over the world.

Tere Vadén (FI): 'Notes on the Sustainability of Open Source and P2P Practices'

<http://www.uta.fi/~fiteva/>

Tere Vadén is a philosopher working in the Department of Information Studies and Interactive Media in the University of Tampere, Finland. He is currently directing the department's Open Source Research Group that focuses on studying the social and cultural aspects of open source development. Together with the group Vadén has published articles on the nature of Open Source communities, their social structure and issues of sustainability. He has written on issues in contemporary art (Rock the Boat: Localized Ethics, the Situated Self, and Particularism in Contemporary Art, Cologne: Salon 2003, together with Mika Hannula) and the political economy of social media (Wikiworld, London: Pluto Press 2009, together with Juha Suoranta).

Notes on the Sustainability of Open Source and P2P Practices

It has been claimed that sustainability is something inherently "peer-to-peer" and "open", or, at the very least, that sustainable systems need to be developed through co-design and co-evolution. At the same time open source software (OSS) development and other social models involving p2p interaction have been hailed as a revolutionary way of organising work and resources. In the case of OSS, several bottlenecks of community sustainability may be observed. In fact, most of the communities and projects never reach maturity. Some of these cultural and social bottlenecks relate directly to the political economy of OSS collaboration, suggesting that the OSS model is not easily transferred outside the realm of digital production. Also, several successful OSS projects have been co-opted or integrated into the capitalist mode of production. However, open source collaboration has already transformed software business, and is in the process of changing business practices in publishing, media, art and so on. Therefore we need to be careful and precise in trying to identify the characteristics that make open source and p2p //alternative// economic models pointing beyond the uneasy co-existence with currently prevailing economic institutions.

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Felix Stalder (AT): 'Economies of the Remix'

<http://felix.openflows.com/>

Felix Stalder is a lecturer in Theory of the Media Society, Media Arts Program, Zurich University of the Arts. He also works with the Institute for new Cultural Technologies in Vienna, where he organized a series of international conferences, most recently Deep Search: The Politics of Search Engines (2008). He is a long-time moderator of the nettime mailing list and initiator of the "Kunstfreiheit.ch" initiative. His publications can be found at felix.openflows.com

Economies of the Remix

Major segments of the cultural industries have been devoted to creating and distributing identical copies of "original" work. Digitization and unregulated communication made the distribution of works a non-commercial activity. Remixing has undermined – in practice – the notion of original work and the copyright regimes based on it.

New economies of the remix are emerging. On the one side of the spectrum are giant platforms (youtube, myspace, flickr) who facilitate new forms of mass creativity at the price of appropriating the surplus (at least what the investors expect). On the other side is a renewed interest in embodied aspects of culture (which cannot be copied easily) and the promise of a much broader range of cultural expressions and communities to become sustainable, beyond the hit-driven logic of commercial media.

Sara Sajjad (SE): 'Fried Sparrows - world domination in a swarm'

<http://piratbyran.org/>

I'm with Magnus Eriksson the media contact for Piratbyrån that started on this channel on IRC (or actually at a pub) in 2003. Lets talk about what IRC is. I'm a writer and a movie star as "the girl in steal this film". I don't disagree with copyright, I just don't care. I'm busy with creating the future and making it possible for artists to survive on their work, with recreating old frames and rules of managment. I live in five different places so the Swedish passing of the IPRED law, which allows companies to get the registered address behind an IP if the IP is doing something they don't like, is kind of harmless to me. But I have some principals left, a little bit of soul. Lets talk about that also.

Fried Sparrows: world domination in a swarm

We are [living in] interesting and boring times. There's a trial in Sweden questioning if it should be legal to be rude to the copyright industry. We are eventually facing prison sentences for connecting people to each other, for actually linking, for promoting artists and for being smart enough to create software. We are not charged because we are doing a criminal action - the whole of internet is sued for having the ability to share information. It sounds insane but here we are. Lets talk about what the Piratbyrån in Sweden is, why we burned our book, how we bought a bus, sharing is caring, kopimi, power, and everything else that's non-related to and at the same time the reason why a nice little website scared the crap out of Hollywood.

Wojtek Mejor (PL): 'Warszawa Gratis'

<http://www.warszawagratys.info/>

Wojtek Mejor was born in Warsaw in 1980. He has spent 14 years living abroad out of which 10 years in Finland, 3 in Spain and 1 year in Germany. After completing a BA course in Graphic Design in Vantaa, Finland he worked in several digital and advertising agencies in Madrid and Helsinki but in recent years he has gradually shifted away from the advertising industry and has become more involved in educational, socially engaged and artistic projects. Currently he is living in Warsaw and developing educational workshops in the field of media. He is involved in Pixelache since 2003.

Warszawa Gratis

Every day somewhere in the city there are concerts, screenings, theatre plays, lectures, workshops, meetings and other events that don't require tickets or fees. People meet and do things together without the involvement of money. WarszawaGratis.info is an on-line calendar with detailed information about a large variety of free events within the bounds of Warsaw. It allows and encourages input from volunteers through a simple form available on the website and also features a map with all the places where free events take place regularly.

Saija-Riitta Sadeoja (FI): 'Porkkanamafia: from a mob to an institution'

<http://porkkanamafia.wordpress.com/>

Saija-Riitta Sadeoja has been involved actively in Porkkanamafia since August 2008. She was a negotiator in the first event in Finland, and she is the negotiation leader in Helsinki division. She works in clinical research.

Porkkanamafia: from a mob to an institution

Carrotmob is a method of activism that leverages consumer power to make the most socially-responsible business practices also the most profitable choices. Businesses compete with one another to see who can do the most good, and then a big mob of consumers buys products in order to reward whichever business made the strongest commitment to improve the world. It's the opposite of a boycott.

Eero Yli-Vakkuri (FI): 'Uuva: yet an other monetary project'

<http://uuva.storijapan.net/>

The spokesman of the Uuva-project Eero Yli-Vakkuri is a multidisciplinary artist based in Helsinki. He works in the field of live- and new media arts.

Uuva - Yet an other monetary project

Uuva - "Currency of New Work" is a year old project aimed for small communities, artist groups, bands and independent culture workers. The Uuva project hopes to compensate volunteer/unpaid-work with a coupon that can be re-used by the receiver. The currency is used when people trade services with each other. It is especially aimed for organizations and individuals working without of governmental/other means of funding. Uuvas have been distributed in live-art festivals and via snail-mail.

The value of a Uuva-coupong or note depends on the service it has been traded for and it is not tied to any other currency yet. Its value is constantly floating. Each note has an unique trade history which can be viewed on the project website. The situations where Uuvas are used give focus to economic systems that are NOT dependent on regular-money. The project hopes to emphasize the importance of unpaid work done by small communities and independent culture workers.

As setting a price tag on volunteer work can have a negative affect on a community depending on volunteer contributions, Uuva is in a beta testing stage. At Pixelache project spokesman Eero will give a introduction to origins of Uuva, problems it has confronted and share some development plans. In its ongoing beta stage Uuvas have been used by independent new media artist, small theatre productions and in exchange for beer.

Kristoffer Lawson (FI): 'Scred: virtual companies and managing money for communities'

<http://www.scred.com/>

I am a co-founder in the Finnish community money service, Scred, and been an entrepreneur for many years. Additionally I am the founder of one of the largest and most influential digital art festivals in Finland, The Alternative Party. I'm a fan of powerful music, Caterham 7s, Doctor Who and rebellion – as long as it's constructive.

Scred: virtual companies and managing money for communities

Scred manages money for groups and communities. It is an online service that helps bands, film crews, flatmates, travel companions, friends, clubs and associations get on with what they do best, while Scred tracks income, expenses, revenue, debt and profit in a meaningful manner which is easy for anyone to use.

Geraldine Juarez (MX): 'Tanda Foundation: Apply, Donate, Create'

<http://www.tandatanda.org/>

Geraldine Juárez (México) is interested in the creation of objects and interventions that use low-tech, waste, survival and alternative economy as frameworks, to spot, deface and interfere the logic of dominant modes of consumption, production and interaction. She also belongs to the art-duo Forays, a group interested in art as a tactic to research, created and modify everyday infrastructure.

Her work has been exhibited in the United States, Canada, Mexico and Europe in shows such as Interference and Feedback (Eyebeam), Other Options (inCubate), Social Fabrics, Wonder Women: Money, Money, Money! (abc norio), Actions: What you can do with the City (CCA), Collecart (Museo del Juguete Antiguo) and State of the Art: New York (URBIS) - and festivals, such as Piksel, Transmediale, Futuresonic and Conflux. She has been resident-artist at inCUBATE in Chicago, and Senior Fellow at Eyebeam from 2006 to 2008.

Tanda Foundation: Apply, Donate, Create

Tanda Foundation is an experimental not-for-profit foundation to facilitate public funding for creative practice. The model takes advantage of the democratic nature of the web 2.0 to create a platform of collective authorship, with a public and accountable cultural agenda. The Foundation is run and held by its own users, which are at the same time the Patrons and Candidates that generate financial and cultural capital.

The model is inspired by an alternative economy practice established in Mexico called "Tanda", a free form of economy practice and rotating credit association common among illegal immigrants in the United States as a response to the inability of joining the regular banking system, as well in Mexico where the less privileged class population can't keep up with the credit system.

Tanda Foundation allows members to post proposals, give donations -limited to 20 us- and vote to decide which projects will receive the funds collected in each monthly cycle.

In addition to 'Cash' grants, we offers 'Fame' grants, which allows association to the Tanda Foundation and vice-versa, by including a reference in a curriculum vitae. This potentially increases the chances of being eligible to receive bigger institutional grants! The goal is to create a network surrounding our Foundation which grows; and as the fame of our recipients increases, the more valuable it will be to belong to the Tanda Foundation.

Seminar chairpersons

Roope Mokka of Demos Helsinki

<http://www.demos.fi/>

Roope Mokka is a researcher and creator of social change, a writer and a lecturer. He has ten years of experience in researching the interaction between technology, society and media. Mokka's fields of expertise include peer production, democracy, cities and low carbon futures. He has studied social sciences, e.g. he has a BSc degree in communications and society from the University of Leicester and a master level degree in television studies from the University of Bristol.

Mokka works at Demos Helsinki, the only independent think tank in Finland. Demos Helsinki was established in 2004, and Mokka is one of its founding fathers. Previously he has been working as an analyst at the Ovum Ltd. in London, as a researcher for MediaLab at the Helsinki University of Art and Design, Culminatum Ltd. and a freelance reporter.

Marita Muukkonen & Ivor Stodolsky of Perpetuum Mobile

www.perpetualmobile.org

Perpetuum Mobile brings together multiple fields of art, practice and enquiry that exist in disparate institutional frames and territories – acting as a conduit and engine to re-imagine certain basic historical, institutional as well as theoretical paradigms. It is piloted by Ivor Stodolsky and Marita Muukkonen. Ivor Stodolsky is a Researcher at the Aleksanteri Institute of the University of Helsinki, and an independent writer and curator currently based in Helsinki. Marita Muukkonen is Curator at FRAME - The Finnish Fund for Art Exchange, and works as editor of FRAMEWORK - The Finnish Art Review. From 2001-2005 she was at NIFCA, The Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art. Among its first projects, Perpetuum Mobile curated the exhibition THE RAW, THE COOKED AND THE PACKAGED - The Archive of Perestroika Art (KIASMA, 2007-8) and edited Framework Issue 8/2008, Paths Not Taken.

Perpetuum Mobile is in permanent motion, yet its archive can be found at the above url.

Organiser of seminar

Andrew Gryf Paterson

<http://agryfp.info/>

Andrew Gryf Paterson is a Scottish artist-organiser, cultural producer and independent researcher, based in Helsinki, Finland. His work involves variable roles of initiator, participant, author and curator, according to different collaborative and cross-disciplinary processes. Andrew works across the fields of media/network/ environmental activism, pursuing a participatory arts practice through workshops, performative events, and storytelling. He is currently a doctoral candidate at University of Art and Design (TaiK), consolidating under the thesis title of "Artivistic Fieldwork: participatory platforms, devised events, and socially-engaged art storymaking".

In past Pixelache Helsinki Festivals, he has organised the international 'Locative Media Workshops' held in the Helsinki Central Railway Station (2004, and 2006), presented his practice-led research in the 'Architectures for Participation' Seminar (2007), and led the 'Baltic Boxwars' networked-events between Finland and Estonia (2008). Since last summer, he has also been a board member of Piknik Frequency ry. (producers of Pixelache Festival, Helsinki).