

Ein Blick in die Zukunft – zurück zur Erde A Look into the Future: Back to Earth

Project about visions in a port district

Lichthaus Plus Neue Kunst, public space, Bremen/Germany, 2003/04

In the summer of 2003 Pia Lanzinger invited the residents of Bremen's port district Gröpelingen to write and send in fantasy stories, utopias or futurist scenarios. This call for text submissions, circulated in German, English and Turkish, inquired into what kind of radical change the future had in store for the people living in this district. The stories that were sent in had a common central core. They referred to the loss of identity that would be caused by the decline of the harbor and in the shipbuilding industry and the major changes to the district that would result, namely, away from the picture of a dockworkers' district defined by tradition and towards a multiethnic appendage to a gigantic shopping mall and entertainment park in an antiseptic, hi-tech, space-age décor. The upshot of the changes that city planning, politics and business firms have up to now agreed on – though under an audible grinding of teeth – are at present hardly foreseeable. The economic situation has dampened any past euphoria; hyped-up expectations of profits have vanished and the general mood is fast approaching an all-time low, even if politicians still today put on a brave face for the media. The theme is an omnipresent one and has penetrated the positive, as well as negative, fantasies of the authors who reacted to Pia Lanzinger's call. For they are the ones who have to live with the consequences of this one-sided "city planning" decree.

The theme is of interest far beyond this specific scene of action. It has a universal character: the transformation of an open, unlimitedly accessible (and the precise reason for calling it) "public" space meant for everyone into zones that are exclusively subject to economic laws, dictated and driven by the wish for an efficient consumerism unhampered by any barriers. Gröpelingen is a case in point that is already one in a long chain of examples...

Over the past three years that the program series "Lichthaus Plus Neue Kunst" (lighthouse plus new art) has existed, statements by the artists were important themes on different forms of living together, how to organize one's imposed spare time, the use of spatial resources, the design and alteration of one's environs. Pia Lanzinger has taken this artistic praxis further by not only offering the residents and interested parties art, but by granting them a mouthpiece that creates, as it were, an arena that turns them into protagonists. Pia Lanzinger withdraws behind the opportunity she has created and grants others, who are permanently involved in the situation, the possibility to formulate their ideas. At the same time she shapes this common process of articulation with the potential inherent to her as an artist: she initiates the stimulus, portrays the authors at the scenes of their stories, creates public interfaces by means of a series published in a newspaper (*Weser-Kurier*) and by documentation in her own publication. In this way she makes use of the possibilities for action granted by the relative autonomy of art to reflect on the non-artistic domain and its adaptation. *Horst Griese, 2004*

Epilogue by P.L.

After its completion, the Bremen "Space Park", because of a lack of tenants, never did go into operation as a combined entertainment and shopping complex. At the end of 2003 therefore, only the entertainment area, the "Space Center", opened, which however had to close a half a year later for want of customers.



A Look into the Future: Back to Earth

Describe your visions, your utopias and scenarios for the future of Gröpelingen. The bandwidth for this part of the city can go from your quite concrete perspectives and ideas, to an ideal fantasy world, all the way to a science fiction story.

What could Gröpelingen ideally look like in the future? Will this quarter have found a form in which everyone can live happily and peacefully together? Where there are no problems, no unemployment, money worries or quarrels? Describe your utopia.

How will Gröpelingen have changed after 20, 50 or 100 years? What will have come of the Weser? What role will the Space Park play? Will it attract thousands of visitors or will it have been torn down? Will there be even more artificial event worlds?

Who will be living in Gröpelingen at a specific time in the future? Where will the inhabitants be working and doing what job? How will they move about? How will they communicate with each other? What will they eat? Write your science fiction story on Gröpelingen.

