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Border Crossing Services

Border Crossing Services

A project by Martin Krenn & Oliver Ressler

Direct mailing in Styria at the EU-border (AT), 2001

Exhibition at the Kunstraum of the University of Lüneburg (DE), 2001

Exhibition at the Pavel-Haus, Laafeld in Styria at the EU-border (AT), 2001

"In fortress Europe you still have holes where we can enter, and people are still entering." (Jean Jacques Effson Effa in the video Border Crossing Services)

The European Union member states' restrictive immigration regulations mean that there is almost no chance to legally migrate to the EU and reside in a member state. For those who want to enter, making use of border crossing services is often the only possibility for penetrating "Fortress Europe."

The goal of the project "Border Crossing Services" ("Dienstleistung: Fluchthilfe") is to redefine and highlight the positive aspects of terms such as "smuggler" or "trafficker" which have been given a negative connotation through the dominant medial discourse. In contrast to the widespread model for representation, the actual act of "smuggling" is not presented as a criminal exploitation of asylum seekers. Instead, we highlight the service character of this business made necessary by European policies of exclusion. Associated themes such as borders, migration and escape were worked on in cooperation with anti-racist groups, migrant organizations and students at the University of Lüneburg.

"Border Crossing Services" was carried out in a variety of media such as a direct mailing and a video which, together with additional fields of information, form an exhibition in the Kunstraum Lüneburg.

The project is based on a process-oriented approach. Throughout its course, results from the different areas of research mutually influenced the other aspects of the endeavor.

Direct-mailing "Neues Grenzblatt"

Participating groups: Platform "Für eine Welt ohne Rassismus" (For a World without Racism), Forschungsgesellschaft: Flucht und Migration (Research Group: Flight and Migration), TATblatt, Zebra, Maiz, The Voice, Kanak Attak, TschuschenPower

Neues

GRENZBLATT

Exklusiv:
Bilder von der
steirischen
Grenze



DEUTSCHLAND

Organisationen gegen den
EUropäischen Abschottungsprozess

DIENSTLEISTUNG: FLUCHTHILFE!

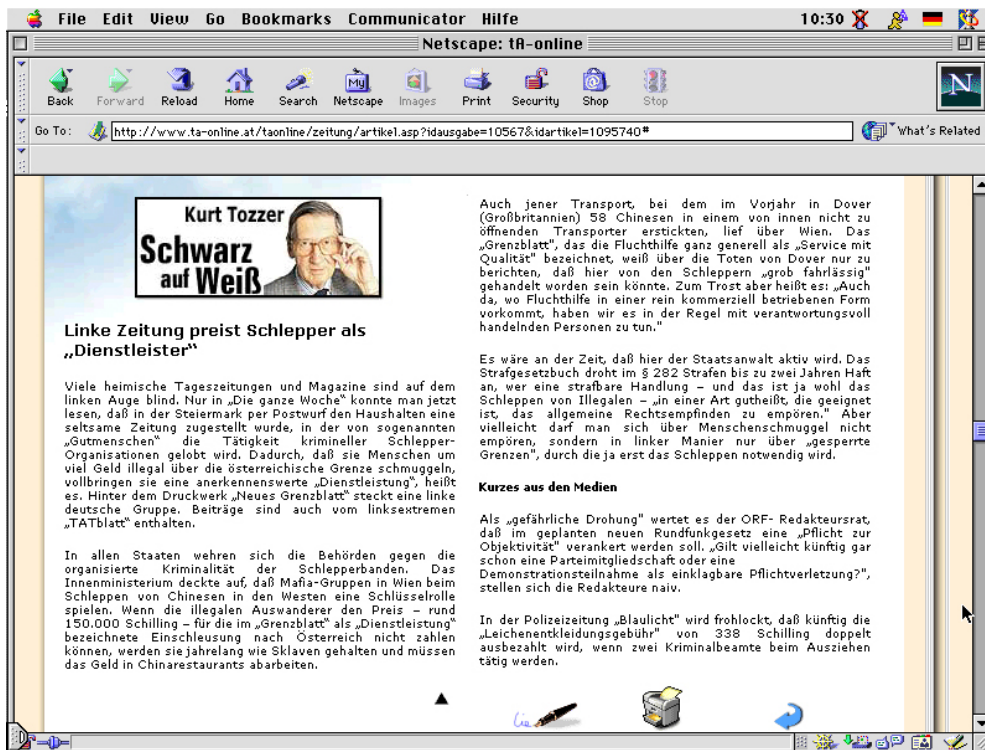
Service mit Qualität

Südsteiermark: Umfrage an der Grenze

Helfen ÖsterreicherInnen „illegalen“ GrenzgängerInnen auf der Flucht?

"Border Crossing Services". Front cover of the direct-mailing "Neues Grenzblatt", 2001

In cooperation with anti-racist groups and migrant organizations, the informational brochure "Neues Grenzblatt" was produced and distributed in April 2001 along the outer-borders in Styria (AT) to 12,000 households as a direct-mailing. The layout had a "folksy" design to allow easier entry into a confrontation with the themes. The popular design featuring pictures of the region and headlines such as "Border Crossing – Quality Services" is meant to arouse the curiosity of the region's inhabitants. The readers are confronted with anti-racist positions and perspectives which are marginalized in conservative media. In the text contributions from the participating groups, all have employed a language which could theoretically also appeal to readers less familiar with such material. The informational brochure was also distributed at diverse events (some held in public spaces) and in cooperation with leftist groups. The brochures are also freely available at the exhibition.



Right-wing media agitation against the direct-mailing "Neues Grenzblatt": Kurt Tozzer, Schwarz auf Weiß, Täglich Alles (online), 23.05.2001

Video "Border Crossing Services"

A video (51 min., SD, AT 2001) forms a central element of the exhibition, and was also shown at thematically related events and alternative video festivals. It confronts the hegemonic model for representation of "border crossing services" and migration. Based on conversations carried out in Germany and Austria with immigrants and persons involved in the political left, the basic theme was separated into four sections for analysis and critique: "Who is allowed to migrate?," "Celebrating and excluding," "About border crossing services" and "Against racism."

A representative of the activist group "Taxistas" describes how taxi drivers in Germany are criminalized as "smugglers" for transporting illegalized people. The section "Celebrating and excluding" is a "short report" about the latest war machinery for border security, eagerly presented by soldiers at a festival of the federal armed forces at the Heldenplatz in Vienna on the Austrian national holiday. In the section "About border crossing services," a conversation with a leading border patrol officer in Frankfurt an der Oder shows contradictory arguments which are used to try to legitimize racist mechanisms for exclusion. The video premiered in March 2001 at the Diagonale, the Austrian film festival, in the framework of the events series "Politik bilden!" ("Form Politics!").



"Border Crossing Services", still

Exhibition "Border Crossing Services"

Project group Lüneburg: Tina Dust, Uta Gielke, Maja Grafe, Nina Heinlein, Patricia Holder, Mara Horstmann, Sarah Kaeberich, Nina Koch, Susanne Neubronner, Astrid Robbers, Stig Oeveraas, Sabine Zaeske



"Border Crossing Services". Seminar at Universität Lüneburg, 2001

Starting from a block seminar which we carried out at the University of Lüneburg, participating students formed a self-organized project group. In order to counteract the hierarchical relations which can possibly develop in the cooperative work between artists and students, we decided to present together the works which we co-produced, the independently produced contributions of the project groups and our own exhibition contributions in a commonly created exhibition framework. All of the exhibition contributions were discussed in working meetings held at various stages of development. Thus, critique could subsequently be integrated into the later stages of the production process.



"Border Crossing Services". Installation view: "Dienstleistung: Fluchthilfe", Pavelhaus, Laafeld, 2001

During a visit to Frankfurt an der Oder, research was carried out at the border. Elements of this research owed into a video produced by the students which deals with further facets of the theme of migration and border crossing services. Conversations between members of the project group with students in Frankfurt an der Oder, with representatives of the migrant group "Kanak Attak" in Hamburg and with representatives of "Netzwerk gegen Rechts" in Lüneburg form a pool of research which allows insight into the local situations and reflects the students' approach to the theme. The resulting video, edited by the project group was shown along with the video "Border Crossing Services" as a video projection in the exhibition.

In a wall installation, texts, direct-mailings and flyers refer to the work of the groups who wrote articles for the "Neues Grenzblatt" and to other contacted groups. Based on a seminar on racism led by Ulf Wuggenig at the University of Lüneburg held during this time, the project group chose quotes from the literature discussed and discussed them with us. This is shown in an exhibit of text passages from the

literature, which together with anti-racist magazines form a theoretical framework for the individual elements of the exhibition.



"Border Crossing Services". Distribution of the direct-mailing "Neues Grenzblatt" in public space, 2001

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