

Map and Land,

Peter Weibel questions anti-democratic trends

Maps tend to swallow up land – this is something we have known ever since Jorge Luis Borges, Jean Baudrillard and Günther Anders. The media would seem to simulate reality with such perfection that we can no longer tell the difference between the map, the medium of representation, and the land, reality. But this model still holds the covert assumption of an original difference, a residual core of ontology.

However, events since 1989, a cipher standing for the demise of Communist blueprints of society and for the rise of Neo-

Liberalism in combination with global media conglomerates and multinationals, suggest that the map itself not only maps, but also constructs the land. The map does not tend to swallow up the land (if it did, we would still know what the land is or was), but rather the map tends to create the land.

The media construct reality. Where no reality exists the way the media want it to be, the media force this reality to exist. Not, that is, by drawing a false picture of reality, as they used to, but rather by actually creating this reality. Paparazzi photography that sets a trap, for example by using a paid strip-tease dancer, for an aristocratic husband to stumble into in front of carefully located cameras, is equally just a symptom of the

Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (Jürgen Habermas, 1962), or **The Fall of Public Man** (Richard Sennett, 1974), as is the global media success of special investigator Kenneth Starr.

Not only the media as a whole are becoming paparazzi media, politics itself is availing itself of paparazzi methods to succeed in a media society. Special investigator Starsky, a network-based

from a court official into a paparazzo in order to bring down President Clinton. Politics as blackmail in the style of paparazzi methods demonstrates the dominance of media over society, 97 being replaced by the mechanisms of media construction of reality and that, as a result, the model of the map and the land now only works to a limited extent is all part of the effects of the global media.

Media and Reality

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in the paparazzo mentality of the media

The rule and hegemony of media society over reality.

So the question that the German sociologist Oskar Negt raises in his book *Warum SPD? 7 Argumente für einen nachhaltigen Macht- und Politikwechsel* (Why the SPD? 7 arguments for a profound change of power and politics) (1998), i.e. is there a "reality below the public sphere" that is conveyed by the media," is reminiscent of the old metaphor of the map and the land, in which the land is covered by the map. But the question today is, is there anything beyond the media? In view of the fact that the media unequivocally construct reality, it is no longer as easy to tell apart the elements of the map and the land as classical critical sociology would have it. In a process of mutual adaptation and blackmailing, no longer just by means of false coverage and 'false awareness,' it is rather by means of mutually accorded resolutions that the media and politics create reality.

The globalisation of the media, desired by politics and the media, serves precisely this aim of achieving a diffusion of reality in which all news, be it false or true, every kind of observation, be it false or true, has its irreversible effect in reality, be it in appeal proceedings, elections or share prices. The fact that the mechanisms of the social con-

Naturally enough, the media, striving as they do to maximise profit like any other group of companies in liberalism, support the logic of capital and thus the anti-democratic trends of Neo-Liberalism. Equality and

emancipation, basic democratic rights once intended to safeguard the bourgeois public, ideally free of state and commercial interests, can no longer be restored in a public sphere in which private or state-held mass media link profit-oriented private interests with unprofitable general interests.

Thus, the media around the world are tending to become an anti-democratic force which, the larger they become, increasingly support populist politicians and aim to bring about the downfall of democratic, political life. The media (*à la Murdoch*) want to become multinationals themselves and thus pursue the same undemocratic, liberal logic of capital as other multinationals. The devaluation of democracy that goes hand in hand with the rise of Neo-Liberalism is made possible precisely by the link-up of politics and media. The anti-democratic trends of Neo-Liberalism and the mass media are mutually intensifying.

As a result of the implosion of the map and the land, media criticism and social criticism can no longer be divided. Exploring the media construction of society, history, memory, reality, politics and the public sphere is thus the main theme of the art and global media project.