

Marina Gržinić
**Drawing a
Border
(Reartikulacija,
Part 3 of 3)**

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→ Continued from issue #1: *Between Resistance and Commodity (Reartikulacija, Part 2 of 3)*, by Staš Kleindienst

The dissolution of borders appears to mark the last chapter in the success story of the neoliberal capitalist world. This is also the stage upon which a whole history in relation to the Wall that once divided East and West Berlin, and Europe, is constructed. On page six of the August 2008 issue of Lufthansa's inflight magazine, a full-page German National Tourist Board advertisement announces 2009 as the year of the 20th anniversary celebration of the fall of the Berlin Wall, with the slogan, "Welcome to a land without borders." Although we now have a feeling that invisible borders are preventing the space of the world (or, to be precise, that of the neoliberal global capitalist world) from being open and flexible, we nevertheless have to think differently. On one side, we witness an unbelievable circulation of positions that prevent us from imagining the space of contemporary art and culture, the social and economic, as being enclosed by borders; on the other, we witness the disappearance of borders that firmly installed such clear divisions in the past (as in the time of imperialist capitalism). What we are now witnessing is a process in which this disintegration of borders is part of an ideological, discursive process reorganizing the new Europe, as well as the world.

This question concerning the disappearance of borders is closely connected to processes through which capital is accumulated. One process is what David Harvey has called "accumulation by dispossession," in which wealth is accumulated through redistribution and appropriation of assets (through the channels of credit systems, predatory speculation, privatization of land assets, etc.).¹ The second process is what we are facing today, what Michael Hudson has termed "the imperialism of circulation."² In his 1972 book *Super Imperialism: The Economic Strategy of American Empire* (republished in 2003³), Hudson describes not a crisis of gaps in distribution, but the opposite. Already in 1972, Hudson announces that the borders preventing distribution would be removed by the imperialism of circulation. It is my position that both of these processes – accumulation by dispossession and the imperialism of circulation – have to be seen not as two distinct means of accumulating capital, but rather as operating sequentially, with one (dispossession) creating the conditions for the other (circulation) to dominate.

But what subsequently becomes important is a parallel process equivalent to Hudson's "imperialism of endless circulation," in which – with reference to Jelica Šumič-Riha's article "Prisoners of the Inexistent Other" – what is really impossible in the world of capitalism today is impossibility as such. These two ideas work together: on one side the imperialism of circulation; on the other the impossibility of something being impossible.⁴ The imperialism of circulation, in its frenetic processes, prevents any subversion, any attack on a master entity. Because everything circulates, everything exchanges, no obstacles are to be found in the network that structures reality for us. Those once perceived as enemies, from individuals to institutions, behave as if we were all in the same "shit," as if we are all together, as if we all have to find the remedies to our problems, needs, obstacles, and the like. Meanwhile, those responsible for expropriation and dispossession have seemingly been forgotten. It is almost impossible to say that something is impossible today. Or, to put this differently: a subversive act was possible in the past to disrupt clear divisions in society. We had the borders – the big Other, the virtual symbolic order, the network that structured reality gave "consistency" to things, so to speak. In its singularity, there was almost a guarantee of some kind of subversive intervention against it. The world today presents itself in endless circulation – a "friendly" and endless exchange – and only one measure is proposed to confront problems of expropriation, enslavement, and neocolonial interventions through capital, and this is called "coordination." I recently came across a serious political proposal suggesting effective "coordination" as the only thing to be done. My question is: can we really be dumb enough to believe in such naïve theories? We have to be clear that it is impossible to overcome social antagonism and class struggle through a managerial "coordination" of social, political, and economic levels of society.

In an atmosphere of such cheerful celebration of a world without borders, it becomes necessary to advance another thesis or logic – we need borders more than ever. How is this possible? The answer is very simple: to establish a border means to present, to incorporate, to take a clear political stance, to ask for a political act, to draw a line of division that can rearticulate this new world that seems to be without borders – in which the only thing that seems impossible is impossibility as such. Is this the realization of a dream? If so, then whose dream? Whose mobility? Whose impossibility? To show a border within the inconsistency of the big Other means to act – to act politically. This act changes the very

coordinates of this impossibility – it is only through this act that I can effectively assume the big Other's nonexistence. This implies not only that one has to take representation into one's own hands and establish a border in a cynical situation in which the only thing that is impossible is impossibility as such; as Šumič-Riha argues, it is also necessary to build a framework, to establish new parameters and coordinates for the political act. What is then required is a precise new conceptual and paradigmatic political act within this new framework. The political act is always a division – a placement of a border within a space, reconfiguring, closing, or stopping the imperialism of circulation without difference as it establishes a new structure to which to relate. An act is always performed through enunciation, which not only sets the parameters that initiate the act itself, but the parameters in relation to the Other, whom it addresses as well. A political act is that which interrupts a situation in which the only impossible thing in the world is impossibility as such.

In the case of so-called Fortress Europe, in order to realize the dream of its borderlessness, it has been necessary to apply a process of fierce equalization to all strata of its societies, with regard to their social, educational, and cultural aspects. By installing one of the most ferocious politics of dispossession, local specificities were transformed into ethnic ones, and one general path of history and genealogy was established as the only valid one for art, culture, science, and social sciences – the capitalist deregulation of history, present and future.

Thus, in rearticulating a certain history of global capitalism and borders, it becomes clear that, though the so-called multicultural ideology of global neoliberal capitalism during the 1990s declared the existence of other worlds, it did so only (and solely) to set the stage for a second step, for the iron logic of the imperialism of circulation to take hold. In order to do this, an accelerated process of dispossession was put to work to clean up and evacuate every difference. These two stages are captured in the field of contemporary art in a project I have dealt with on another occasion.⁵ In the 1990s, Mladen Stilinović declared, "An artist who can not speak English is NO artist." As a work of art, this sentence depicted exceptionally well the initial multicultural logic of 1990s neoliberal global capitalism. It indicated a specificity that had to use the "common language" of translation, regardless of how good it was. A decade later, in 2007, I proposed a correction of this sentence-as-artwork: "An artist who can not speak English WELL is NO artist." This is the new process of dispossession that goes along with the process

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of emptying the world of any political content – it is a formalization and equalization of positions that allow for easy circulation.

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“Reartikulacija” is an art project by a group consisting of Marina Gržinić, Staš Kleindienst, Sebastjan Leban, and Tanja Passoni. The group also publishes *Reartikulacija*, a journal for politics, art, and theory, edited by Gržinić and Leban.

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1

See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 159.

2

See Michael Hudson, *Super Imperialism: The Economic Strategy of American Empire* (Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

3

Michael Hudson, *Super Imperialism: The Origin and Fundamentals of U.S. World Dominance*, 2nd ed. (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2003).

4

Jelica Šumič-Riha, "Jetniki Drugega, ki ne obstaja" [Prisoners of the Inexistent Other], *Filozofski vestnik-Acta Philosophica* 1 (2007): 81-103.

5

See Marina Gržinić, *Re-Politicizing Art, Theory, Representation and New Media Technology* (Vienna: Schlebrügge, 2008).

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