

For a... functional utopia ? A review of a position

Un texte de **Liam Gillick**

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"Utopia Station" is complicated. Writing about the project produces a necessarily partial and fragmented account due to the mass of meetings and discussions, both formal and informal that have surrounded its various manifestations. In relation to the decision to avoid personal projects in this book, things are further problematised by my involvement in "Utopia Station", which means that this text should exclude itself from consideration from publication. Yet the implicated role of the artist within the curatorial structure and vice versa, combined with the peculiar nature of "Utopia Station", as an extremely inclusive and promiscuous event means that hopefully it should be considered a special case here. I also find it difficult to accept the validity of approaching a book such as this without addressing the involved role of the artist in something concrete yet still soft, where people are unsure of their roles and their level of authorship, especially when the approach to the project has been marked by scepticism and enthusiasm at all stages, even from those at the centre of the discussion. For "Utopia Station", organised by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Molly Nesbit and Rirkrit Tiravanija, was not a singular event nor did it develop as a precisely realisable concept. Here I will outline the origins of the project, reproduce an edited version of my sceptical intervention in the first formal discussions around the exercise and follow up with a review of the potential of "Utopia Station" as something "in progress" and dislocated - from the multiple moments of inception to the final intense semi-private arguments surrounding the idea to take the project to the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2005. These discussions arguably became the most productive aspect of the whole project for me up to that point. While I will not go into detail about the various manifestations of the project at the 50th Venice Biennale and the Haus der Kunst in Munich as these have been described and written about extensively elsewhere with all the usual misattributions and misunderstandings it is crucial to understand these key moments as the enabling structures that could lead to such productive follow-up dispute and potential. I will use this opportunity to broadly outline the genealogy of the project from a partial and personal perspective and combine this with critical comments coming from a position of both insider and outsider simultaneously. Hopefully, in the future, this will be joined by further narratives around "Utopia Station", that will inevitably offer some complete inversions of the account here. For it is the following-up aspect of the project that renders it special in relation to the tendency for the culture to produce "re-makes" rather than "episodic" approaches to structures whether they be the Venice Biennale or an improvised project in Brooklyn. With "Utopia Station" we return to the construction again and again. The problems and questions circulate and dissolve, condense and re-emerge. It is easier to organise projects that have one moment of exposure and no developed sense of post-production reassessment. It is the ongoing reassessment of "Utopia Station" built into its structure that renders it relevant for consideration here.

While most exhibition /curated structures embody a sense of hierarchy which is open to challenge from all "sides" (curator, artist, audiences, participants, critical communities) the way "Utopia Station" came together was often contingent upon who happened to be around at certain times, by invitation or accident. Many people, especially theorists and writers were central to the project without appearing to be part of the structure. They often thought they were commenting on an

aspect of the manifestation of "Utopia Station" whereas they were forming the structure as they spoke. Others thought they were defining and pinning down an implicated strategy only to find that the project had already shifted shape and moved along without them. Additionally, as with many projects organised by Hans Ulrich Obrist, a large number of artists were always listed as involved in the "Utopia Station" without contributing a great deal beyond a single poster or their presence at a given event, so we shouldn't look to artist lists for guidance. They often simply formed a particular new kind of implicated "audience" for the multiple events. Bearing this in mind, this text is an attempt to bypass many of the apparently visible participants and look elsewhere for tension and engagement. Many people just happened to be around during a dinner or discussion and limited their role to that one night of confusion or clarity. It is these moments that I am most interested in and that will form the crux of my argument that "Utopia Station" is best considered a site of ideas "in progress" rather than a sequence of moments of discourse or presentation. It is a series of events that are productive and in mid-flow only.

The issue here is not to propose a new exhibition or curatorial structure but to use this opportunity to provide a parallel history of "Utopia Station" and examine something that claims to have no official end point - in other words to look at an ongoing project while it remains ongoing. Through this it might be possible to record the potential of a project not limited to a simple discussion of the relationships between the artist and the curator or the structure and the institution but to unpack the conflicting impulses at the heart of a project marked by a desire to engage and disengage simultaneously from a slippery yet over-determined underlying concept. This is a project where the significant moments have proved hard to express within the mediation of the structure for they are not manifest during the moments of the "Utopia Stations" themselves. This is a text that should reveal the potential of discourse in relation to a distracted structure, which has lent itself to the formation of multiple narratives around the increasing absence of the excessive abstraction at its core. As such this should be seen as one of those narratives and will bypass those that were only reported, as I did not attend the extensive discussions in Frankfurt, Berlin and elsewhere.

The central body of this text was presented as a contribution to a symposium held at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, around the time of the development phase of the project "Utopia Station" during 2002/2003. At that point only the discursive nature of the project had been defined in concrete terms. However, "Utopia Station" had emerged via a wide-ranging invitation from Andrew Brown, commissioning editor at Thames & Hudson, to a number of artists, curators and critics to consider developing books that could function as quasi-exhibitions with no "show". Using as a conceptual base a sequence of parallelities - the body, urbanism, artist's collectives - and so on. Molly Nesbit and Hans Ulrich Obrist had initially outlined the idea of addressing "utopia". These specific invitations from Andrew Brown have produced more than books. Some titles have been developed, such as "Art Works: Place" by Tacita Dean and Jeremy Miller ("Art Works" is the series title), a large number of duos were activated by the process and began initial discussions around possible subjects for publication without actually producing a book for Thames and Hudson. An example would be my own project with Maria Lind provisionally titled "Collectives" which produced a great deal of discussion yet no concrete results. While there was an understandable scepticism from many about the "theory-of-everything-expressed-in-small-chunks" quality of the overall project, most people just sublimated the art part of the equation into freethinking about the potential of its double.

In relation to large exhibition structures, the working methodology of Hans Ulrich Obrist can be loosely described as content-creation heavy. He has brought a uniquely energetic and complex

approach to curating over the last fifteen years. In many cases he has reconfigured the hierarchies of exhibitions by drawing a relatively un-premeditated set of content providers into a loose mix that will inevitably generate content and lead to the establishment of a book machine that will somewhat configure itself via discussion and discourse rather than through classical models of over-determined planning. Of course such an approach is what has led, in the past, to accusations of relativistic bricolage from some who would prefer things to remain more fixed and less mutable - effect and process being the primary providers of meaning within the exhibition structure rather than the presentation of discrete artworks. It is a promiscuous approach that has mutated recently, possibly in the light of the "Utopia Station" experience, and been affected by his recent series of monographic exhibitions for the ARC in Paris and his ongoing interest in producing texts and projects with individual artists.

Molly Nesbit is primarily a theorist and critic teaching at Vassar College in upstate New York and a contributing editor to *Artforum*. Her extensive knowledge of twentieth century avant-garde practice and her relative inexperience in relation to large contemporary exhibition structures ensured that she offered a level of precision and pacing that is normally considered out of sync with the increasingly blur of exhibition making. The dominant structures that surround cultural production have tended to over-emphasise Nesbit's position as an art historian and therefore underplay her role as an equal curator of the "Utopia Station". Her position throughout has been complex yet at the centre of all developments around the project.

Rirkrit Tiravanija's work is often incorrectly described as involving the presentation of undirected or content free places for the encouragement of open discourse. Anyone familiar with his work or with a passing knowledge of any of his projects in the last fifteen years will know that there are always structured intellectual backdrops to his projects - films, texts, subjects, teaching projects - that form a critical vortex at the centre of each work that are there to be engaged with or not in a manner that rigorously attempts to avoid didactic or dogmatic mirroring within the work of aspects of the society which are already known to the dominant discourse. The "Utopia Station"s in Venice and Munich were little different, apart from the open inclusion of multiple parasitical projects around the central core, which functioned as plug-ins in relation to the quasi-architectures at the centre and periphery of the events.

Hans Ulrich Obrist, Molly Nesbit and Rirkrit Tiravanija adapted the initial concept of a project related to the notion of utopia and in light of their perception that many other artists and curators had also some interest in the conflicting discourses around the notion of idealised progressive models, started a process of bringing together critics, theorists, philosophers, artists and hybrid figures for a sequence of discussions leading to the creation of a content heavy ultra discourse that would begin to find some distribution form at the Venice Biennale in 2003 and continue to mutate and develop during an unspecified number of future projects, locations and events.

Hans Ulrich Obrist had been invited by Director Francesco Bonami to contribute a curated section of the 50th Venice Biennale. Obrist suggested continuing the development of the Utopia project alongside Molly Nesbit, so the combination of a potential book and a potential exhibition structure were fundamental to the development of "Utopia Station" as a semi-functional project. In 2002 Rirkrit Tiravanija had also been asked to contribute a curated project to the Biennale. Having recently worked on a number of "stations" for exhibition structures (literally station-like neo-architecture) it was decided to combine the utopia project with a new "station" for Venice. A sequence of meetings took place in early 2003 in Berlin at which I too was invited to

contribute ideas to the overall physical design of the Venice space along with a number of other people.

The project finally presented in Venice included a large basic "station" structure that was designed by Rirkrit Tiravanija, seating adjacent to the station designed by myself. Various parasitical semi-autonomous projects such as the Guarana Bar by Superflex, Martha Rosler's work with her Scandinavian students, Christoph Schlingensief's "Church of Fear" and Radio Arte Mobile organised by the Zerynthia group. The manifestation of the project also included a series of posters, each by a different contributor to the discussion and in many cases posters designed by various contributors as their sole offering to the project. This poster project became the central core of "Utopia Station" and the only aspect common to further manifestations in the Haus der Kunst in Munich and in Porto Alegre during the World Social Forum. The text that follows was presented before the "Utopia Station" project had become completely clarified and the conference during which it was presented was marked by the conflicting desires to sustain an open-ended discourse on one hand and to know more about the precise details of the planned manifestation of the "Utopia Station" project in Venice that was clearly already forming in the minds of the curators.

THE UTOPIAN IMPULSE IN THINKING IS ALL THE STRONGER, THE LESS IT OBJECTIFIES ITSELF AS UTOPIA – A FURTHER FORM OF REGRESSION – WHEREBY IT SABOTAGES ITS OWN REALISATION. OPEN THINKING POINTS BEYOND ITSELF. FOR ITS PART, SUCH THINKING TAKES A POSITION AS A FIGURATION OF PRAXIS WHICH IS MORE CLOSELY RELATED TO A PRAXIS TRULY INVOLVED IN CHANGE THAN IN A POSITION OF MERE OBEDIENCE FOR THE SAKE OF PRAXIS. BEYOND ALL SPECIALISED AND PARTICULAR CONTENT, THINKING IS ACTUALLY AND ABOVE ALL THE FORCE OF RESISTANCE, ALIENATED FROM RESISTANCE ONLY WITH GREAT EFFORT

(Adorno, *Resignation*, 1991)

Over the last few years I have avoided a number of exhibition structures that have used the word "Utopia" as part of their underlying concept. The reason for this is connected to my resistance to the misreading of some work now as being solely part of some semi-effectual quasi-utopian project or at best a commentary upon a particularly Anglo-Saxon misreading of post-modernism predicated upon an ironic focus on the failure of modernism which renders all progressive thinking as Utopian by default. My interest is far more grounded and potentially complicating than this. And could be described as an ongoing investigation into how the middle ground of social and economic activity leaves traces in our current environment. For if we agree that we live in a post-consensus sequence of moments, you might also agree that we live in a post-utopian environment that requires analysis. Throughout, of course, I am glossing over the notion of the rogue individual, the visionary and the baroque dream-scapers. Their apparent "visions" are retrogressive and not utopian in quality as they are not part of an effective critique of contemporary social models. So, if we are working in a post-utopian situation, how are things still agreed, planned and developed and who controls these processes? And if the situation is effectively post-utopian in terms of the absence of functional alternative visions, does the word Utopian only exist as an accusatory for cultural workers now? If it is true that there are no functional utopias describable today, what kind of alternative vision can be proposed to the dominant ideologies that control and alienate our relationships and circumstances? The reason for avoiding these prior utopia structures has been connected to my rejection of the assumption that any progressive movement is somehow utopian. My recent use of the term "post-utopian" in

writing and in relation to my work is an attempt to break free from the application of the word utopia to any old (modernist) alternative structure that happens to have existed.

The modern left has always been multiple and essentially fractured, the nature of its developed arguments never consolidated or singular. So one question might be - is it necessary to resurrect the notion of a functional utopia in order to provide a set of rhetorical tools that might help us out of the currently reactive situation we find on the progressive left, or should we keep with a relativist form of multiple interest development that remains mutable, fluctuating, responsive and inclusive?

My last short book was titled "Literally No Place: Communes, Bars and Greenrooms". It attempted to outline certain narrative structures that might expose the conditions under which we might find ethical and moral traces that resist commodification within our current situation. It is a text that is more focused on the relationship between the urban and rural as it continues to develop under the same cultural conditions - the connection between personal relationship structures within broad battles to control the images that they create and an attempt to look at the particular American development of forms of functional communality in place of the suppression of the legacy and potential of communism and truly alternative structures at an organised and general level. Of course these undercurrents remain deeply embedded within a sequence of narrative texts that present some environments where such play and negotiation might take place. The commune, the bar and the greenroom.

So why would someone change their mind? Why suddenly shift into art association with the word utopia in an art context. If I understand this potential structure - as a participant rather than an organiser - "Utopia Station" appears to be working towards a temporary, if rather visible, marker of a sequence of "becoming utopias" or "in relation to the application of the accusation of utopias" rather than a reflection of work that appears to reference a set of aesthetic tools that have been deemed dysfunctional and rendered as ironic failures by the dominant culture's desire to corrupt and prevent through the accusation of hypocrisy and lack of economic realism, yet are still used and passed around as a sad reminder of how good things could have been. A "Utopia Station", on the other hand, might be an ongoing arrival and departure framed by waiting at an in-between space that has been designated by the organisers. All this combined with something to look at and to pass the time with before moving back into the islands of art and art-like production that are always presented by the Venice Biennale. Rather than a reflection of flawed social models, it could be a refutation of the accusation of utopia, which is merely one stage, or station in the development of any progressive idea. In order to bypass a simplistic application and ongoing corruption of the applied meanings of the word Utopia, the "Utopia Station" might be a call to question whether we are happy with a situation where certain politically engaged art remains characterised by the phrase: "it's all very Interesting but..."

This "becomingness" rather than "aboutness" is combined with a way of reconfiguring and reassessing the activities of certain artists, critics and curators whose position is hopefully shifting and shimmering under the umbrella of the project. Ironically this "Utopia Station" emerges at a time when the worst predictions from the recent past are playing out. The warnings from those who chose to continue the analysis of social and political conditions in the face of emergent globalisation and the rise of relativism have come true. The apparent utopists were working in the realm of documentary rather than fiction after all. The quasi-rationalisations of neo-liberal thinking are, right now, in full flow. Once again confronting us with a non-choice wrapped in a perversion of moral positioning that renders things binary, unsophisticated and potentially deadly. Anyone opposing both the leaden thinking that emanates from the governments of the US and

UK and the too-late manoeuvring and poorly articulated positions of the French, German and Russian governments might be called a tool or worse, a Utopian thinker. The use of a baseball to destroy a hornets' nest is not a perfect technique at any point, but fundamental opposition to the entire matrix of value systems that has generated the current international situation, whether in favour or against a war scenario, is generally viewed as an operational system that should be analysed with utopistic tools at best and suppression at worst.

The problem here is linked to the wide-ranging use of the term Utopia - the literally no place - in our current language. It is a common enough word so we don't think twice about using it. We tend also to associate it with art and architecture or withdrawal and communality. The developed sense of a word that was originally used to title a book that is intended as a localised critique of a particular historical circumstance has little relation to its original meaning. The question is: how does any consideration of such a term avoid the micro-fascistic traps that lie in wait anyone who is not convinced that things are the way they could be?

As I have said, in the hands of neoliberal pragmatists Utopia has come to describe any art movement, architectural moment, political system or communal proposition that doesn't operate within the terms of global capital. Utopian is the term that refers to the desire for something that is impractical, because it levels and implies harmony, while sidestepping the generalised, lurching linearity of the dominant system. The thinking goes that the attempted application of utopian systems has had to be forced onto people whenever it has been attempted. There has always been a suppression of "human nature" in order to temporarily experience something more enlightening and less guilt or repression ridden. The strange thing is that the current international tension is between two sets of people who veil their true interests with a faked set of socio-economic anxieties. The religious underpinnings, and therefore essentially truly utopian, value systems of the ongoing Middle-Eastern crisis are dragging us into mire. The question for us, is do we leave this utopian question to these people to fight over and, or do we reclaim it through the use of analytical tools that are more rigorous at identifying the way things work. The question is, can there be a Marxist analysis of utopia that has any functional role within our range of interests. But it is not as simple as this. Moments in the recent past when people have found their own functional utopias have been suppressed and broken down. Power is most vigilant when mini-utopistic structures emerge and make every effort to point out the apparent hypocrisy in their set ups so as to hasten their demise.

So why use such a flawed dysfunctional, accusational tool for an exhibition title? The question is linked to how to proceed when you are not convinced by current conditions. Working in a relativist, parallel fashion appears to be sufficient at various moments, yet with a continuing proliferation and appropriation of models of radicality by others, it becomes more and more difficult to divine the differences between one named structure and another. It is possible that there is some kind of irony at the heart of its use here. An acknowledgment that the activities of the artists concerned has reached a point of perfect irrelevance. It is arguable that the notion of utopia within the cultural sphere is most attractive to those who have no ongoing interest in making productive change. Instead they create a sequence of mirage visions of how things could be if they were everything/anything/something other than the way they are now. I would argue that the greatest strength of "Utopia Station" would be derived from its becoming a functional utopia. A model of a more discursive and contingent exhibition structure that could cut free from the generalised experience of its hosts and retain a utopistic becomingness throughout the time of any exhibition or display moment. Scooping up and re-spreading a layer of ethical traces from a sequence of suppressed attempts to actually create a better place and

have a better time, rather than just providing soothing images of experimental architecture and a mish•mash of interactive structures. however temporarily interesting they might be.

How could an exhibition like the one in Venice perform tasks of refusal in relation to the utopistic legacy while retaining some reconstituted sense of how things could be? In other words, how could it become a free-floating non-defined sequence of propositions that wander in and out of focus and avoid being lodged within the consumable world of the singular concept.

It is worth taking a moment to reflect upon the physical and temporal quality of the "Utopia Station" project that subsequently developed. In Venice and at the Haus der Kunst in Munich the work inserted itself into established contemporary art structures that have a precise history and programming. In both locations it appeared alongside other exhibitions. In Venice it was an entire mix of parallel exhibitions while at the Haus de Kunst, a large Rem Koolhaas exhibition opened in the other spaces of the institution shortly after "Utopia Station" began. A third potential location emerged around the time of the Haus der Kunst station. Extensive discussions in Poughkeepsie, Venice and Munich frequently circulated around the idea that the "Utopia Station" approach could lend itself to operating within or alongside other structures that might demonstrate a differently engaged relation to the complexity of contemporary Leftist discourse. This was partly in response to a perceived over-reliance on the art context in the initial phases of the project development. Particular enthusiasm for creating an alliance with the World Social Forum came from Molly Nesbit, Liz Linden, Immanuel Wallerstein and the Raqs Media Collective who attended the Mumbai World Social Forum in 2004, returning with detailed reports and video of the event. Immanuel Wallerstein had also presented a paper in Poughkeepsie that made attendance at such an event appear valid. Yet, the moment of decision to attend the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre is hard to identify. A meeting at the TAT (originally the Theater am Turm) in Frankfurt in 2004 further addressed some of the possibilities suggested by potential involvement with the World Social Forum. Flagged on its e-flux communiqué, the TAT meeting circled around the question of implicated and directly engaged future manifestations of "Utopia Station".

While it could be argued that the Haus der Kunst stage of the project was essentially closed off by the boundary role of the institution, the World Social Forum emerged as a potential, non-resolved experiment in establishing relations to organised activism. Rirkrit Tiravanija and Molly Nesbit travelled to Brazil to meet the cultural group of the World Social Forum in November 2004. At this point a great deal of discussion took place about how and in what form a developed presence could be made manifest at the event.

Following these developments, participation in the World Social Forum was presented as something of a *fait d'accompli* and a desire by some before and during discussion about the relevance of the project to the event and the event to the project. Using the assumption that the World Social Forum might be a natural ally and co-conspirator in the establishment of what we might call "functional relativism" within the context of "Utopia Station", it was implied that group attendance might be an assumption as well as a matter for discussion or dispute. Certainly there was precise interest in attending from many after material brought back from Mumbai had been circulated. But clearly faced by scepticism and confusion from some who had been involved in the first two episodes of "Utopia Station", Molly Nesbit arranged a series of meetings in New York City which were open to anyone involved in "Utopia Station" and were presented as opportunities to establish the terms of reference and multiple languages that might

be employed in the event that a group of people felt it to be possible to join the non-aligned multi-faceted collection of interest groups, pressure groups and non-specific alliances that make up the World Social Forum.

The follow-up discussions leading up to Porto Alegre proved the most dynamic, complex and tense of my involvement in the entire project. Generally taking place in New York City, they were marked by the absence of Hans Ulrich Obrist and Rirkrit Tiravanija, although they were constantly in touch by telephone and for the central role taken in the discussion by Molly Nesbit. It was the moment when Nesbit's pedagogical experience could start to function in terms of creating an interface between the participants in small group environments where people could speak freely without appearing to break down the collective multiplicity of the project. They were also notable events for bringing together an inter-generational discussion from a progressive perspective that did not lead to agreement but helped to define difference and conflict in terms of the artist's relationship to the project as a whole.

Martha Rosler, Lawrence Weiner, Anton Vidokle, Pierre Huyghe, Julieta Aranda, Hans Haacke and myself being common figures, engaged in an ongoing, non-recorded, non-transcribed follow-up series of discussions about how to approach a concrete potential engagement with the World Social Forum. The differences of opinion represented in relation to Porto Alegre are worth simplifying for the sake of this text. Broadly Molly Nesbit and Liz Linden spoke alongside the absent participants who believed that it was a social obligation to introduce a real and critical art presence into the World Social Forum without much requirement for further discussion other than in what form a participation should take; Martha Rosler appeared to view it as another possible place to work, little different from any other venue and absolutely different at the same time; Lawrence Weiner expressed that artists are critically engaged with the culture anyway so the approach should not be any different to any other exhibition structure. I agreed with him but added warnings about cultural imperialism and the potential that any art projects at the World Social Forum could become another part of the global trail of art biennales and merely introduce aspects to the World Social Forum which would distract from its core functions. Hans Haacke, Lawrence Weiner and myself also expressed scepticism at the idea of the World Social Forum from the perspective of a classical leftist critique of relativism leading to wilful marginalisation. Anton Vidokle viewed the exercise as one with critical documentary potential. Pierre Huyghe appeared concerned about the relationship between the curators of the project and the artist in terms of the suppression of the artist's critical voice in relation to the event. Many of us were concerned that we would merely appear to be some kind of pressure group among many, but a particularly privileged and well-established one. It was therefore suggested that we either: a) sublimate the authorship of work to the broader structure of the station which would mean posters, video screenings and literature/handouts (Nesbit, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Rirkrit Tiravanija); b) continue our normal artwork which is supposed to be critical anyway and failings within it may be highlighted in a loaded situation (Huyghe, Gillick, Weiner); c) Not go at all (Gillick, Haacke); d) Go and witness/document and listen rather than present or exhibit (Gillick, Vidokle, Weiner). At no time was there any consensus on any of these issues and it was only at the point when a few of those involved in the discussion actually arrived in Porto Alegre that the final manifestation of the project there was articulated and formulated. This group did not include Hans Haacke or myself as we had decided that the World Social Forum could not be treated as a viable place for the ongoing continuation of the "Utopia Station" project at that time.

There have been various misunderstandings generated around the "Utopia Station" project. The primary one being that it was and is somehow connected to an open-ended exhibition structure

with the emphasis on structured events. In fact, as became clear via the Porto Alegre disagreements and discussions converging from the multiple starting points, it is primarily a discursive set up that only has meaning in the midst of its function. As a potential it demonstrates tensions between possibility and realisation expressed in the middle of its function rather than before or after the fact. As a reported event it generally appears as a semi-alternative exhibition structure alone. However, the project should be understood as a series of "Utopia Stations" rather than "The Utopia Station" - a point of temporary stasis within a distracted excess of context. As the few who went to Porto Alegre set up their projections close to a bar outside the official border of the World Social Forum and showed films to locals and participants alike, the echo of the absent complexity of the discourse generated around the project was once again muted by context and pointed towards future obligations to revise the project. A "Utopia Station" is not predicated on a conceit but on the presence of a sequence of discussions that fail to find form within the presentation of the event itself.

The question might be, how to reconfigure a project such as this and redirect focus to an inverted exhibition structure that emphasises the ongoing tensions provided by the context rather than adopting a notionally egalitarian exhibition format where each participant "sets out their stall" within a broad and apparently inclusive set-up. If "Utopia Station" is to have any future role it will be via the careful assessment of the relationship between its presented self and the reintroduction of the ideas produced alongside and within it into new forms of exhibition production unrecognisable from its first pell-mell manifestations in Venice and Munich. Dropping the word "Utopia" could be the first step in reaching towards a structure that could actually point towards the activation of better conditions now that the talk around the abstraction has revealed the necessity for active work. By not going to Porto Alegre, certain people were not aligning themselves with the art-world over the world-world but asserting the discursive nature of the project over replacing one relativistic parent structure with another.