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Overview of the Second International Conference *Re:place* on the Histories of Media, Art, Science and Technology, Berlin 2007, panel 8 Place Studies:Russia/Soviet Union.

I think that the events like the conferences *Re:place* should be the real platform for discussion, exchanging opinions and information. In fact the real feeling of debate is often blurred because participants are from completely different backgrounds. Such situation can also be very interesting because it gives an opportunity to juxtapose totally different attitudes and approaches. Although, in my opinion, the situation is even more valuable when different positions meet, trying to describe the relationship between new media, art and technology, from the various angles whereas in the same time the scientist have a chance to contextualize each other.

Andreas Broeckmann and Gunalan Nadarajan, conference chairs, stress the importance of the notion of 'place' with its multiple connotations not only geographical, but also its cultural, political and technological locations. From my point of view, panels like *Place Studies: Russia/Soviet Union* provide you with the real overview of the subject. I think that such a belief like one history of new media, art and technology does not exist and there are still a lot of small narratives and local histories to be written. *Re:place* promised to be the conference which emphasizes the significance of Central European countries contribution to the development of new media art.

I perceived this panel as very unique because even though all speakers prepared papers on different subjects, all lectures had something in common. It was very important especially for this participants and visitors of the conference who are not really familiar with the topics.

All lectures as well as an introduction by Inka Arns, who tried to outline the importance of Russian avant-garde movements and its technology related utopias, clarified the background of new media art in Central and East Europe and tried to extrapolate the future meaning of collaboration between artists and engineers from such collaboration in the past.

The first lecture by Olga Goriunova gave an account of Piotr Engelmeier's philosophy of technology, who stressed the main role of technology as a human factor.

He was inspired by the number of French and German philosophical trends of the late 19th century, especially by the Bergsonian intuitivism, which in Engelmeier's papers was curiously mixed with the technocratic thinking. His philosophical papers constitute new understanding

of such notions as human being, society and culture in relation to environment, technical revolution and actions. Engelmeier defended himself during the campaign against such an approach in the late 20's philosophy and he became pioneer on that field. He developed cultural approach to technology in which human being is described as a technical one whose main qualities are creativity and inventiveness. The main reason to remind the profile of Engelmeier is a great need of bridging the gap in our understanding of technology as a human factor. This gap was caused by banning the philosophy of technology for its idealism for over 50 years. In my opinion we really need archeological approach in the media art history and technology and if we want to understand what the technology means today, we should first look at its pre-history.

The lectures by Margarete Vohringer *Space, not Stones. Nikolai Ladovskij Psychotechnical Laboratory for Architecture* and by Irina Aristarkhova *Stepanova's "Laboratory"* introduced the meaning and crucial part of the notion of laboratory in the Russian science, but also in the art at the beginning of 20th century.

The main players of Russian avant-garde movements extended the meaning of the laboratory in comparison to the 16th century when the concept first entered European discourse. In the 20th century, the laboratory is not only a place, a building served for carrying out scientific tests, but also a tool for work and for experiments. In the early period of the Communism, the laboratory was a great metaphor for political situation as well as for people's desire to build a new world for a new human being. Russia in the 20s was frequently described as "Laboratory of Dreams," but this term stood also for concrete experimental practices. The notion taken from science was successfully implemented in the field of art. Such people as Stepanova and Ladovskij, who were interested in art as well as in technology, broadened the meaning of notion of laboratory by their activities in the field of theater and architecture.

The last lecture by Margareta Tillberg about the Soviet group called 'Dvizhenie' which existed between 1962 and 1972, also elaborated the concept of laboratory by stressing the importance of collaboration between the artists, actors, musicians as well as engineers in radio-electronic and light-technology, psychologists, architects, physicists, poets, and performing dancers.

I think that all the papers from *Place Studies: Russia/Soviet Union* panel made really great contribution to the main discussion which was held during all the meetings, the issue was the importance of collaboration between artists as engineers and the intrinsic role of technology when new media art is concerned.