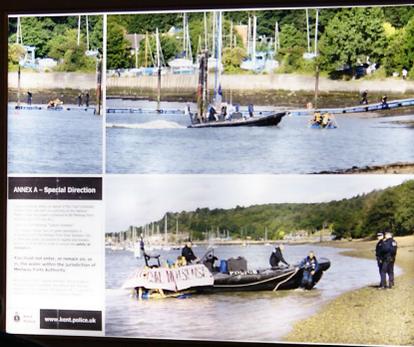


DENATURALIZING THE ECONOMY: OLIVER RESSLER'S POLITICAL ECOLOGY

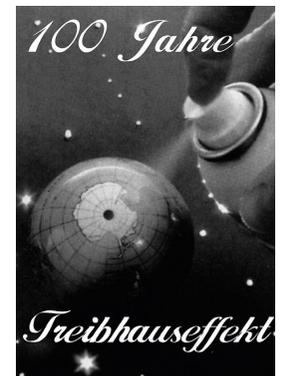
T. J. DEMOS



For A Completely Different Climate,
lightbox, 80 x 61 cm, 2008, courtesy
Galleria Artra, Milan

Oliver Ressler's recent film, *Leave It in the Ground* (2013), begins with shots of the pristine ecosystem of the Lofoten archipelago in Norway's Arctic Circle, its sparkling waters shown meeting the coastal grasses before the low-lying mountains that rise majestically in the background. Commissioned by invitation from the Lofoten International Art Festival in 2013, the film includes a voice-over that describes a conversation between a "fisherman" and an "oil producer," a dialogue of diametrically opposed interests that both offers a glimpse of the current ecologico-political conflict as it bears on this remote Far North region, and extends outward to manifold global environmental crises today. Joining the artist's long-standing commitment to making artistic projects that explore the social, political, environmental, and economic conditions of life under advanced neoliberal capitalism, the piece poses a fundamental question that implicates us all: Whether we—a "we" that transcends this local Norwegian community and suggests a global English-speaking civil society frustrated with the failed attempts by our governments to address climate change—should drill for oil in the Arctic at a time of increasingly limited hydrocarbon reserves, thereby expanding industrial fossil-fuel extraction and advancing further the contemporary death drive toward impending ecological catastrophe; or whether we should "leave it in the ground," transitioning toward a post-carbon future guided by the principles of ecological sustainability, democratic participation, and social equality.

As such, this recent piece is exemplary of Ressler's artistic practice, which, over the course of numerous films, light-boxes, and text-based works over some twenty years, has explored and challenged the central claims of mainstream corporate and governmental discourse on climate change, ecological policy and biotechnology, and invited viewers to consider the larger philosophical stakes of such claims. Going back to such pieces as *100 Years of Greenhouse Effect*, 1996, a text-panel installation for the Salzburg Kunstverein, Ressler has confronted in particular the flawed economic basis of conventional approaches to ecological crisis, as, for instance, outlined in the technocratic agenda of the 1996 "Future-Capable Germany" report compiled by the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment, and Energy. As well, with *Focus on Companies*, 2000, an installation of image-and-text panels, he targeted corporations like Novartis, Schering, Bio-Rad Laboratories, and Roche, drawing attention to the negative socio-political effects of genetic engineering science.



100 Jahre Treibhauseffekt
(100 Years of Greenhouse Effect),
digital print, 1996

1 On the complexity of Ressler's past work in relation to activist forms, see Yates McKee, "Reactivating Productivism," in: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Protest* 1:2, August 2003.



For *A Completely Different Climate*, 3-channel slide installation (detail), 2008, courtesy Galleria Artra, Milan

Critically complimenting this frontal attack on corporate environmental agendas are Ressler's pieces that document and amplify the climate justice activism of social movements insisting on alternative approaches to sustainability and democratic governance, such as *For a Completely Different Climate*, 2008, a 3-channel slide installation with sound that reported on the Climate Camp protests against the construction of a new coal-fired power station in Kingsnorth, England. As the projection rotates through a series of documentary still images of the temporary encampment in the Southeastern region of the country, shown ringed with imposing police checkpoints and surveillance stations, viewers are shown non-violent activists gathered to challenge the hypocrisy of British environmental policy under the Gordon Brown New Labour administration. Still more ambitiously, the piece articulates the failure of post-Kyoto climate protocols on behalf of global governance owing to the latter's paradoxical unwavering commitment to capitalism's growth economy, doing so by including interspersed titles woven into the slide show that reiterate protesters' critical analysis of British and indeed international policies on environmental matters (even while the work nevertheless asserts its singularity as a project distinct from the aesthetico-political sensibilities of Climate Camp¹). Amidst the political chanting and drumming heard on the piece's soundtrack, the voices of participants explain their position:

We do not focus on one issue but have a systemic critique of the problem. The problem is with the growth paradigm. The Kyoto Protocol established an emissions trading system that has had no discernible impact on emissions reductions. Since the Kyoto Protocol was signed, the global Carbon emissions have exceeded the worst-case scenario of the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change]. Emissions trading has had no discernable impact on actual carbon emissions, but it has created a market. By 2020, the global market for carbon emissions is projected to be worth 2,000 billion dollars.

Building on that project's critical insights into the financial priorities of current environmental policies shared by governments worldwide—the problem of the growth paradigm—*Leave It in the Ground* spells out the stakes of the current crisis in more detail. The film offers a narration delivered in the authoritative tones of a British-accented newscaster, as if we're watching a BBC documentary relaying a story about climate change. Yet, as indicated in its title, stemming from the common anti-fossil-fuel slogan of contemporary environmentalists (seen, for instance, written across the back of one activist appearing in *For a Completely Different Climate*), the content of this account is strikingly unlike anything that would typically appear on that or similar mainstream media platforms. While such news services may report on climate change, they do so typically without considering any approaches to the manifold problems that would not begin by repeating the automatically assumed commitment to the free-market principles based

on "sustainable development." As the film's speaker sarcastically intones: "After all one must learn that climate protection is a very relative thing: It must be compatible with economic growth."²

That, of course, is the standard assumption of green capitalism, which, as many critics have pointed out (including members of Climate Camp), offers a largely cosmetic retooling of industrial production without substantially reducing the ruinous accumulation of greenhouse gases, or the pollution of air, land, and water supplies (e.g. Al Gore's already outdated 2006 documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* is exemplary in this regard, as it suggests that trading emissions credits and developing clean and efficient technologies can save us from global warming, with no need to alter the capitalist system in structural ways).³ Broadly speaking, green capitalism proposes to overcome the "limits to growth" approach of the first post-WWII wave of environmentalism (as articulated in the eponymous 1972 UN commissioned report), which was soon seen to represent an unacceptable demand on capitalist globalization, wherein growth represented the answer to poverty alleviation and necessary modernization for recently decolonized countries in the global South, and was taken as a fundamental definition of "freedom" for developed countries in the North.⁴ Neoliberal globalization, however, quickly overcame the "limits" approach by reconciling growth with environmentalist considerations via the compromise discourse of "sustainable development"—what Ressler refers to in his work of 2000 as *Sustainable Propaganda*. That discourse enabled corporations, and by extension an increasingly fossil-fuel addicted society, to continue global development without any fundamental system change in production or consumption models beyond the inclusion of superficial greenwashing design modifications and a mystifying rhetoric of green publicity. However, as critics have shown—including Ressler's pieces such as *For a Completely Different Climate* and *Leave It in the Ground*—this turn toward green capitalism has utterly failed to curtail greenhouse gas pollution, which is all the more astounding when one realizes that the scientific knowledge of anthropogenic climate change is now more than a century old (first studied by Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius in the late nineteenth century, as Ressler's *100 Years of Greenhouse Effect* points out).

Despite such critiques, the continued irrational devotion to the economy above all else has become naturalized as unquestioned common sense within governmental reports, corporate mass media, and UN-instigated climate meetings. As such, it defines the current reigning ideology of our era, according to which the market is seen as part of human nature.⁵ Indeed, as Fredric Jameson has observed—in what has become a frequently cited saying on the Left—"it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism."⁶ Ressler's confronting of this very predicament points to the ambition

2 My recent (admittedly non-scientific) survey of BBC reporting on climate change and global warming yielded the following observations: the news platform commonly reports on climate change by simply amplifying what conservative government officials say about climate change (exemplary of what Glen Greenwald calls "stenographic journalism" completely void of independence and criticality); reported "solutions" to climate change threats generally come from within the framework of neoliberal capitalism, free-market and growth-economy assumptions; articles frequently excitedly portray geoengineering techno-fixes as modes of adaptation (implicitly accepting a future of climate change); and there is never any mention of anti- or non-capitalist initiatives, such as degrowth and deglobalization proposals from eco-socialist or other unconventional sources. See, for instance, "How Broadcast News Covered Climate Change In The Last Five Years," January 16, 2014, <http://mediamatters.org>.

3 For a devastating critique of such an approach, see Richard Smith, "Green Capitalism: The God That Failed," in: *Truthout*, 9 January 2014, <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/21060-green-capitalism-the-god-that-failed>.

4 See Donella H. Meadows, et al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, London: Earth Island, 1972.

5 The notion that "the market is in human nature" is a proposition that Fredric Jameson once said "cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged," arguing that the contestation of this ideology—the idea that the market is our second nature, a given, a biological fact—is "the most crucial terrain of ideological struggle in our time." While it has been more than twenty years since he wrote these words, the situation has only become more pronounced, and its stakes all the greater. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991, 263.

6 Fredric Jameson, "Future City," in: *New Left Review* 21, May-June 2003.

7 See http://www.ressler.at/for_a_completely_different_climate/.

8 See "Approaches Against the Fossil Fuel Fundamentalism: An interview with Oliver Ressler by Dorian Batycka, with an intervention by Mike Watson," July 5, 2013, accompanying Ressler's participation in the Maldives Pavilion of the Venice Biennale of 2013, <http://maldivespavilion.com/blog/interview-leave-it-in-the-ground-by-oliver-ressler/>.

9 For a wider consideration of this term, see my guest-edited special issue of *Third Text* (January 2013) on the subject of "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology." On contemporary economysticism, see Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers, *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell*, trans. Andrew Goffey, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

of his project, which is precisely to imagine a world beyond capitalism and beyond its naturalization of finance, an ambition that he has long investigated through the political-aesthetic intertwinements of his artistic practice, including his many documentary accounts of anti-capitalist and environmentalist social movements like Climate Camp. As Ressler observes, to realize something like "a completely different climate"—where "climate" references an ecology of politics as much as Earth's natural systems—climate change would need to "be confronted through a radical transformation of society that would effectively challenge the existing distribution of wealth and power-relationships that are guaranteed by the military."⁷ Which leads to the following formulation: "the main task today is to combine the discussion of climate change with the discussion of a need of a change of the economic and political system."⁸ Such is a succinct formulation of the key ingredients of current political ecology, which can only begin by overcoming what might be termed contemporary *economysticism*, according to which the world and all elements of life are envisioned through a financial lens, as if nature is in some sense economic, and the economy a part of the natural order.⁹

In this sense, Ressler's work is significant for raising a set of critical questions that few others are asking today. Among them, a critical inquiry into the nature of value and the value of nature, which anthropogenic climate change forces us to ask, even while dominant corporate-media discourse is generally set on suppressing it altogether: that is, whether we as a civilization would agree with the fisherman or the oil producer, as represented in *Leave It in the Ground*. Do we support the intrinsic value of nature as an ecologically integral site of biodiversity and interconnected life systems, seeing the Norwegian archipelago as a spawning ground of fish that forms part of a complex and interdependent ecosystem? Or do we agree with the oil producer who views the archipelago as a source of wealth accumulation, because "people can live with less fish, but not without oil." And so, with a quasi-religious fanaticism that enables a person to see money as more important than food, he explains: "We will extract millions of barrels of petroleum. It will make us rich, much richer. We are living in uncertain times. The economy is in crisis. What oil will give us is certainty."

If we go for the latter madness, what about the specters of environmental devastation that haunt this commitment to oil, the drilling of which would bring as well the "certainty" of the destruction of the seabed through the release of toxic and radioactive materials, as drilling effluent mixes with some of the cleanest water in the world? What about the negative effects of noise pollution and oil rig traffic on local animal life, as well as the carbon emissions that would further impact climate chance, endangering the viability of Earth's biosphere?

What certainty does the oil producer offer us beyond what Ressler's voice-over reminds us is the certainty of continuing down the road toward irreversible civilizational collapse?¹⁰

The imagery of the film is striking in this regard, as, over the course of its eighteen minutes, it mixes diverse geographies into a cauldron of geopolitical-environmental conflict—shots of ocean fish in the coast of Norway lay atop scenes of BP's Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, and images of calamitous flooding flow together with footage of UN climate summits. The resulting geo-aesthetics of montage allegorizes the interconnectedness of ecological systems, where politics and industry appear in cause-and-effect relations with natural environments, even as the inability to govern nature in a sustainable way at present brings disastrous results to the very sites of political and corporate power and decision-making.

The inability of our current system to imagine any form of environmental value that is not founded on an economic calculus—as in recently developed "natural capital" economics, and the latest corporate approaches to "ecosystem services" that "natural resources" are seen to provide—is perhaps one of the greatest threats to life as we know it, and an outcome of what *Leave It in the Ground* terms "fossil fuel fundamentalism." In this regard, Ressler joins a growing chorus of social activists in speculating what an alternative model of value might be, calling to mind David Graeber's social anthropology, where value, far from defining narrowly conceived financial wealth, figures as "a set of practices, beliefs, and desires that bring universes into being, a place where the world is continually re-constructed, and where human beings undertake the project of mutual re-creation."¹¹ According to Graeber's post-economistic definition, the way in which we define value, and importantly how we practice that definition, makes certain forms of life possible, others not—for instance, an ecologically sustainable world, or one headed for "a militarized geography of social breakdown on a global scale," as Ressler's film warns (and dramatizes in the accompanying images of trains transporting military tanks superimposed over pine forests and seascapes, as war capitalism dominates nature).

More, as *Leave It in the Ground* makes clear, climate-change disaster is not some distant future dystopia, but already impacts our present. As the film's narrator observes,

The United Nations has estimated that all but one of its emergency appeals for humanitarian aid in 2007 were climate related. Already now climate change adversely affects 300 million people per year, killing 300,000 of them. An estimated 50 million people have already been displaced by the effects of climate change, and the numbers will escalate in years to come. A study from Columbia University's Center for International Earth Science Information Network projects 700 million climate refugees will be on the move by 2050.

¹⁰ Such language may sound alarmist, but in fact it is employed guardedly by scientific bodies. See, most recently, Nafeez Ahmed, "NASA-funded study: industrial civilisation headed for 'irreversible collapse?'" *Guardian*, 14 Mar, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com>. For a broader picture of one potential dystopian future, see Christian Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence*, New York: Nation Books, 2011.

¹¹ See David Graeber, "It is Value that Brings Universes into Being," in: *HUA: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3/2, 2013, pp.219-43.



For A Completely Different Climate, lightbox, 80 x 110 cm, 2008, courtesy Galleria Artra, Milan

These figures call to mind related catastrophic events of recent years, like the superstorms Hurricane Sandy that struck New York City in 2012, and Typhoon Haiyan that hit the Philippines in 2013, as well as the uncontrollable wildfires in the drought-afflicted West of the US in 2014, and the destructive and unpredictable heavy downpours in places like Kenya in recent years. All figure as current examples of the negative effects of climate change brought to mind by Ressler's film's repertoire of appropriated imagery. As his film notes, "Weather joins the chaos, un-free market chaos, with unprecedented temperatures and unprecedented rains. Climate refugees, displaced farmers, subject to victim-blame, have no choice but to make for the city."

Toward the end of the film, something striking happens to Ressler's narration. The speaker is in the midst of citing negative statistics and terrible future scenarios, wherein climate change figures as threat multiplier leading to geopolitical conflict over increasingly scarce resources, agricultural lands, and clean water supplies. At this point he starts to yield to whispered threats and emotional outbursts, which interrupt his otherwise scientifically supported, but unbearable discourse. In these moments, the exemplar of white male authority, and token of the governmental-media elite, appears to lose control and yield to irrational behavior. It's as if the necropolitical and ecocidal ramifications of military neoliberalism cannot help but to affect its stable, self-assured reportage.

With these and the above passages in mind, we can appreciate the multifaceted modeling of political speech that Ressler's films gather together, which works in tandem with his visual montage. Considering *Leave It in the Ground* in particular, the film performs the disturbance of conventional corporate news and nature programs, giving rise to a linguistic struggle between discourse and conflict, between language as the performance of normativity that naturalizes politics, and language as a counter-discourse of disruption that erupts into babble. This babble suggests not only the overwhelming severity of the ecological crisis we face and its ultimate inability to be translated fully into conceptual intelligibility via mass media soundbites, but also the meaningless verbiage of so much media spectacle that ignores that crisis altogether in favor of the endless production of un-newsworthy non-events. Although the narrator's subject-position might be initially mistaken for the authoritative rhetoric of corporate media, it instead proposes a vehicle of radical content marked by multiply-determined valences that invites from viewers a considered retort as much as collective politicization and solidarity. This invitation toward solidarity connects to Ressler's documentary reporting on grassroots social movements, as in *For a Completely Different Climate*, calling attention to collective struggles against the continuation of the government-corporate-military complex that has defined late capitalist modernity. As such, the films together enable the formation of critical speech acts by literally enacting



Focus on Companies,
digital print on aluminium,
54 x 74 cm, 2000

the vocalization of words otherwise consigned to noise in our increasingly privatized public sphere, words that are seldom heard in media forums generally merged with corporate interests. In this regard, these films practice what Ressler (writing with Gregory Sholette) has termed "unspeaking the grammar of finance"—in other words, unlearning the semiotics of money that has suffused seemingly all aspects of our collective life worlds, including the everyday language of ecological matters.¹²

By animating languages of value alternative to neoliberalism's economism, Ressler's work brings other universes into being, reconstructing the world and our relation to it. Going beyond the various proposals of green capitalism, including its dubious models of ecologically-sensitive design, its megalomaniacal geoengineering projects, its myopic techno-fixes, *Leave It in the Ground* centers attention on the economy: "Demystifying the economy; decarbonizing the economy; democratizing the economy; decapitalizing the economy"—this is the solution of Ressler's political ecology.

While admittedly part of a minoritarian discourse waged against neoliberalism's nearly global hegemony,¹³ Ressler's project nonetheless forms part of a growing multitude of forces intent on rethinking approaches to climate change from outside capitalist assumptions, including forces emanating from the global South as much as the North. These include indigenous enviro-political formations (such as The World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth that met in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in 2010, Canada's Idle No More movement, the Kari-Oca II declaration of indigenous people in Rio, Brazil, 2012, and the ongoing Zapatistas' revolution in Chiapas, Mexico); eco-socialist activists and policy analysts like Chris Williams, Richard Smith, and John Bellamy Foster¹⁴; Green party and World Social Forum politics posed against the elites of the World Economic Forum and conservative governments worldwide; transition-town, de-growth communities of localist eco-practitioners; experimental artists operating at a critical distance from the commercial artworld; Earth jurisprudence environmental lawyers like Polly Higgins and Cormac Cullinan; alter-globalization Occupy-affiliated social movements; and eco-feminists, small-scale farmers, and radical gardeners struggling against the corporate "biopiracy" of native species and the neo-colonization of GM seeds, and for pro-Earth democracy.¹⁵ While such a list represents a complex intersection of internally diverse groups and individuals, the varied elements share a commitment to comprehending ecological sustainability in ways newly delinked from the financial priorities of economic growth and unlimited development. In this vein, such a transversal network of political formations recalls Ressler's multi-video and publication project *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* of 2003-07, which explores a similar array of creative social movements thinking outside the neoliberal box (including libertarian municipalism and partici-

¹² See the introductory essay of Gregory Sholette and Oliver Ressler, "Unspeakable Grammar of Finance," in: *It's the Political Economy, Stupid: The Global Financial Crisis in Art and Theory*, ed. Gregory Sholette and Oliver Ressler, London: Pluto Press, 2013, pp. 8-13.

¹³ On the history and theory of neoliberalism—which represents the integrated system of free-market deregulation, privatization, and the defunding of social welfare and public institutions that defines advanced global capitalism—see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹⁴ See in particular, Chris Williams, *Ecology and Socialism: Solutions to Capitalist Ecological Crisis*, London: Haymarket, 2010.

¹⁵ Ressler compiles his own related list in the Maldives Pavilion interview: "There are several examples for anti-capitalist struggles and practices with articulated focuses on ecological issues that already go back many years, and I believe there is no way to call them opportunistic: the self-government of the Zapatistas in the Lacondonian forests in Chiapas, the Guardia Indígena of the Nasa in the South of Columbia against the timber and mining industry, the transnational activities of the peasant organization Via Campesina, Murray Bookchin's attempts to initiate ecological and self-managed communities in the U.S., the aforementioned climate camp movement in the UK, Germany and elsewhere, to name just a few. All these are clearly anti-capitalist and ecologically oriented at the same time, not because of opportunism, but because of an understanding that a serious implementation of ecological principles will have to shred the free-market ideology that has dominated the global economy for more than three decades, as a serious response to climate change requires the break of every rule in the free-market playbook."

16 For an excellent starting point for the proposed platform for such a social movement, see Naomi Klein, "Capitalism vs. the Climate," in: *The Nation*, 9 November, 2011, <http://www.thenation.com/article/164497/capitalism-vs-climate>: "We will need to rebuild the public sphere, reverse privatizations, re-localize large parts of economies, scale back overconsumption, bring back long-term planning, heavily regulate and tax corporations, maybe even nationalize some of them, cut military spending and recognize our debts to the global South."

patory economics, and new socialisms and utopian feminism, seen against the backdrop of historical and contemporary social movements, from workers' self-management practice in Yugoslavia during the 1960s and 1970s, to Zapatista collective governance).

Faced with the reality of catastrophic climate change, and equipped with a range of proposals for demystifying, decarbonizing, democratizing, and decapitalizing the economy, the hysterical narrator of *Leave It in the Ground* at one point angrily yells out: "Do not expect your politicians to make these decisions on your behalf!" Among the film's crucial lesson is that "after years of recycling, carbon offsetting and light bulb changing, it is obvious: individual action just doesn't do the job when it comes to climate crisis." Despite whatever significance it may represent as a form of individual contribution to a different world, so-called ethical consumerism is also a further crass maneuver of green capitalism: to distract us from the necessity of forming social movements to bring about transformative, systemic change.¹⁶ Ressler's narrator articulates what his films demonstrate and help realize: "only collective action will do."

DIE ENTNATURALISIERUNG DER WIRTSCHAFT: OLIVER RESSLERS POLITISCHE ÖKOLOGIE

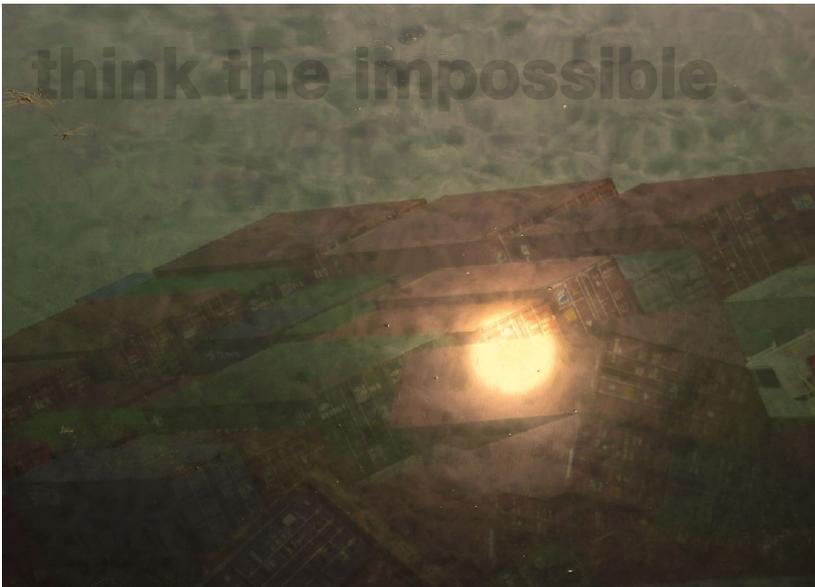
T. J. DEMOS

Oliver Ressler's Film *Leave It in the Ground* (2013) [Lasst es im Boden], ein Auftragswerk des Lofoten International Art Festival 2013, beginnt mit Bildern des vorzeitlichen Ökosystems der Lofoten im norwegischen Polarkreis. Vor dem Hintergrund der vom Meeresspiegel in majestätische Höhen aufragenden Berge wiegen sich Küstengräser in glasklarem Wasser. Der Film beinhaltet als Kommentar ein Gespräch zwischen einem „Fischer“ und einem „Ölförderer“, einen Dialog diametral entgegengesetzter Interessen, und macht so den Blick frei für den gegenwärtigen öko-politischen Konflikt, der auch diese entlegene Region im hohen Norden erreicht hat und auf die vielfältigen Umweltkrisen in der ganzen Welt ausstrahlt. Als Produkt von Ressler's langjähriger Beschäftigung mit künstlerischen Projekten, die sich der Erkundung der sozialen, politischen, umweltbezogenen und ökonomischen Lebensbedingungen im fortgeschrittenen neoliberalen Kapitalismus widmen, stellt das Werk eine Frage, an der keiner von uns vorbeikommt: Sollen wir – und dieses „wir“ geht über die kleine lokale norwegische Gemeinde hinaus und zielt auf eine globale englischsprachige Zivilgesellschaft, die vom Versagen der Regierungen im Umgang mit dem Klimawandel schwer enttäuscht ist – in einer Zeit des rapiden Schrumpfens der fossilen Energieträger in der Arktis nach Öl bohren? Sollen wir die industrielle Förderung dieser fossilen Brennstoffe noch einmal ausdehnen und den Todestrieb unserer Zeit in Richtung bevorstehende ökologische Katastrophe noch einmal beschleunigen? Oder sollen wir, auf unserem Weg in eine postkarbone Zukunft, die sich an den Prinzipien ökologischer Nachhaltigkeit, demokratischer Partizipation und sozialer Gleichheit orientieren wird, das Öl „in der Erde lassen“?

Diese neuere Arbeit steht beispielhaft für Ressler's künstlerische Praxis, die im Lauf der letzten etwa zwanzig Jahre ihren Niederschlag in zahlreichen Filmen, Leuchtkästen und textbasierten Arbeiten gefunden hat. Ressler erkundet und hinterfragt die zentralen Thesen des von Konzernen und Regierungen geführten Mainstream-Diskurses und lädt die ZuschauerInnen ein, sich vor Augen zu führen, worauf diese Behauptungen in letzter philosophischer Konsequenz hinauslaufen. Mit Arbeiten wie *100 Years of Greenhouse Effect* [100 Jahre Treibhauseffekt] aus dem Jahr 1996, einer Textpaneel-Installation für den Salzburger Kunstverein, hat sich Ressler immer wieder besonders mit der ökonomischen Schiefelage



100 Jahre Treibhauseffekt
(100 Years of Greenhouse Effect),
billboard, 1996
Installation view:
100 Jahre Treibhauseffekt,
Salzburger Kunstverein, 1996



Leave It in the Ground
(Think the impossible),
LED light box, 84,1 x 59,4 cm, 2014