

**18TH INURA MEETING -ATHENS 3-10 OKTOBER 2008
ABSTRACTS**

The Offshore World is in the City

The contribution is related to a the common project of a photo exhibition on tax havens and offshore economy of the planning office Stadtblind and the working group on financial markets and taxes of Attac Germany. The exhibition is in preparation and should be ready in summer 09 and will be shown in several cities in Germany, Austria, Norvegue, France and probably other countries.

It deals with the relation of offshore and conventional territories, especially with the contradiction of rhetorics of offshore providers which is contrasted with the concrete spaces. Tax havens and offshore centres are commonly associated with positive images of remote sunny islands. Providers of offshore services like to talk about tax paradises, sunny islands and freedom, where capital is agile (or, as Germans say, as “flighty as a fawn”.) They like to contrast this with notions of tax hells and obsolete state bureaucracies.

The intention of this project is to deconstruct this positive imagery and use the exhibition to show tax havens not as island paradises, but as juridical constructs central to the existing economic system and offering special privileges to wealthy people and corporations. To hide this offshore providers construct today's Potemkin villages: letterboxes, billboards, alibi residences in Gibraltar or big banks which are officially sited next to cow sheds. We want to stress that tax havens are not exceptional and exotic, but core elements in the global financial system. Ironically offshore originally referred to the ocean islands belonging to a specific country, but the biggest Offshore Center of the world is the City of London.

Beyond this the aim is to make aware that a new form of society arises which is beyond the state's regulation: the Offshore World. This comprehends not only tax issues but also sweatshops without regulations, ships sailing under flags of convenience and avoiding not only taxes but also workers rights and environmental laws. All the diverse forms of the offshore economy have in common that the conventional legal structures do not apply.

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