

## The Institute

*Free science for a free society.*

What is the Institute? Since by now it only exists in a realm of ideas a definite answer has to be postponed but one can approach its definition by stating ‘how’ science can be done differently. The Institute can create a space outside the ordinary scientific world,<sup>1</sup> still strongly linked to it through personnel and content, but probing into unknown territory if it comes to the code of conduct. By creating, at least temporarily, new scopes of knowledge, the seed of revolutionary science<sup>2</sup> may well be planted.

A critical view towards present-day natural science unfolds the whole field as largely isotropic, a culture depleted of creativity and joyfulness, instead fuelled by keen competition for international recognition and even more for public and corporate funding. Any wish for wholeness, deep understanding, beauty, or wonder is not only discouraged in this environment but in the long term turns out to be counterproductive in decorating the CV. This effectively discriminates basic research and even if labelled as ‘fundamental’ it needs to justify itself constantly by references to possible future ‘cures for cancer’.

As if this alone would not be enough to kill off creativity and insurrectional spirit, the academic system is pervaded by a strictly hierarchical structure. Lower ranks are usually still freed by a certain ‘jester’s licence’ but have to adopt early enough not to lose their prospect of promotion. And as one climbs the ladder, a necessary strive for power, like in other professional fields, will determine the academic career.<sup>3</sup> And there is not much hope that this situation might change soon, after all our universities are, beside church institutions, the oldest social structures, visibly proven by their archaic rites. Other loci of academic life, like research institutes, are clearly more modern but even closer aligned to industry thus betraying freedom from its onset. This spurs us to lay foundations to our own Institute.

The primary goal for the Institute is now clearly stated: Create a zone of scientific counterculture. This zone is already a success if its occupants find courage for unconventional explorations into science, probe new fields of common interest, and share joyful moments of spectacular insight. But it also means gaining language versatility to mediate between the fields while keeping different standpoints and using those areas of friction as condensation points for novelty.<sup>4</sup> It is about addressing the theory–practice dichotomy, getting a grip on the very substantial from the depth of the mind and vice versa. It is with

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<sup>1</sup>Perfectly in the sense of a “Temporary Autonomous Zone” following Hakim Bey.

<sup>2</sup>In reference to Thomas Kuhn.

<sup>3</sup>A comprehensive power analysis at (French) universities has been undertaken by Bourdieu in *Homo academicus*.

<sup>4</sup>It will prove vital to include the humanities in this struggle.

a permanent concession towards independence from established institutions as a prerequisite, simultaneously realising that gaining recognition and visibility cannot be an objective. Then, by opening, democratising the discourse, it may gain an educational impetus, hopefully attracting fresh influences and sending out the spirit. A spirit of “counterscience” that, in festive acts recognises the fullness of worldly phenomenon instead of trying to dissect nature by means of a simplified vocabulary.

– Markus Penz, September 2014 (CC BY 3.0 licence)