

## **Rivers & Bridges**

### **Backward Translation as a Creative Strategy**

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Start-up in Internet: Early 1996 at [http://www.ping.at/thing/orfkunstradio/RIV\\_BRI/](http://www.ping.at/thing/orfkunstradio/RIV_BRI/)

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After September 5, the project will be continued in Internet as an international communications structure for both large and small communications projects in the future.

*Horizontal Radio*, [1] a totally new type of radio and Internet project, premiered on June 22-23, 1995, broadcasting for 24 hours on 30 channels of 24 radio stations throughout the world while simultaneously unfolding in studios, on stages, at installations, performances, concerts, etc. in 24 cities on several continents as well as in Internet. As a result of its tremendous success, *Horizontal Radio*'s participants and observers are going ahead with the further development of the possibilities that were tested for the first time in this project. [2]

In 1995, Ars Acoustica's group of experts decided to pursue further the theoretical and practical issues and problems raised, but by no means definitively answered, by their experience with *Horizontal Radio*.

The pre-established topic *RIVERS & BRIDGES* was agreed to by the experts of Ars Acoustica. The radio art directors who gathered in Budapest in December 1995 commissioned two artists, Jocelyn Robert and Janos Sugar, to put together general considerations, thus to formulate proposals and commentary, without granting them any sort of presiding role beyond this [such as that of a news discussion group moderator].

An additional and equally essential reference implicit in the subtitle "Backward Translation as a Creative Strategy" that Jocelyn Robert and Janos Sugar have selected for *RIVERS & BRIDGES* is to the [re]animation of the potential of the medium of radio. Dealing with this issue of the potential of radio and transmitted/broadcast/recycled sound and their general accessibility seems to take on even greater urgency now that radio and recorded/digitized sound are on the verge of becoming content elements, or possibly even mere instrumentalized aspects, of a hypermedium which has begun to emerge in the convergence of mass media, computers and telecommunications. In spite of all the hype that has accompanied the development of Internet and the WWW, this hypermedium has increasingly become characterized by such a high degree of constriction and monopolization that a *backward translation as a creative strategy* positively forces itself upon all those not interested in "business territories," infotainment, etc. but rather in "a small net in a big world." [3]

Consistent with these findings, the project has no center, no superartist who designs a concept which the others execute, no curator to select contributions and contributors. Furthermore, none of the participants or individual projects are named in the catalog, the final version of which has already been completed and submitted three months prior to the project's start-up date — not only due to the great many changes possible before September 5 in the lists of participants, but also because there is no center capable of actually compiling this information. Each and every participating country/radio station/group of artists has independently designed its contribution to *RIVERS & BRIDGES*. Technicians and scientists can be linked up in exactly the same way as other experts, hobbyists or simply anyone who has something to say or to tell on the subject.

On September 5, 1996, the Ars Electronica Festival will also constitute an important junction point in an extraordinarily high-energy network. Through laborious preliminary work in the face of powerful forces arrayed against it, particularly the indifference and ponderousness of the institutions involved, this network has been set up to link [committed individuals at] public broadcasting stations, independent stations, pirate radio crews, groups of artists, cultural initiatives and participants from highly diverse population segments, age groups and professions. In a collective effort representing a broad spectrum of theoretical and artistic approaches, a network of performances, installations, readings, radio Aktionen, Internet projects, etc. will crystallize on or about September 5 from out of the data flow of Mediascape, in which the culture of the technologically "advanced" sector of the world [consciously ignoring the culture of all other sectors] places itself on display. This network can be entered at various different access points by anyone who can pick up the program of one of the participating radio stations, or has access — from anywhere — to Internet and/or attends one of the local live events. *RIVERS & BRIDGES* thus seeks to reflect upon a wide range of timely issues related to the theoretical and practical significance of digitalization and of the new communications technologies for our culture.

The Ars Acoustica Group consists of radio directors involved with radio art, representing all Eastern and Western European EBU-member Public Broadcasting Corporations and their associates in the USA, Canada and Australia.

1 Kunstradio Online: [http://www.ping.at/thing/orfkunstradio/Horizontal Radio](http://www.ping.at/thing/orfkunstradio/Horizontal%20Radio) — die unmögliche Dokumentation. Double CD. Edition Kunstradio. [Address: Argentinierstraße 30 a, 1040 Vienna, Austria; Phone: ++43 1 50101 8277; Fax: ++43 1 50101 8929; e-mail: [kunstradio@thing.or.at](mailto:kunstradio@thing.or.at)] In cooperation with Transit.

2 Also see Heimo Ranzenbacher, *For a Digital Renaissance of Situationism*, in this catalog.

3 Geert Lovink, *A Small Net in a Big World, Or: The Importance of Being Media*. Nettime, June 2nd 1996.