

# Walkersdorf — Center of the World

cym

Participating artists: Pila Rusjan, Luka Dekleva, Luka Princic, cym

Walkersdorf is a small village in southeast Austria. It is east of Graz and south of Vienna, about 35 kilometers from the border with Hungary and about 35 kilometers from the border with Slovenia. It is a village with about 235 inhabitants. It is located along route number 66 that goes from Ilz to Feldbach. If it wasn't for a famous restaurant in Walkersdorf that is located directly next to this important connection road, most people passing through the village probably would not remember it.

If you take the time and make a short walk into the village behind the restaurant, you will find a village similar to many other villages in the area. If you speak some German and ask people in their gardens if there is anything special to see in the village, they'll probably answer you, that there is nothing special in Walkersdorf. "Maybe the pigs that are in a huge cage at one side of the village are worth a walk, and there is a little chapel at the entrance of the village, but apart from that", they will tell you, "there is nothing special to see."

People in Walkersdorf live their lives quietly. Most of the people have been living there all their lives, for generations. Most of the people that come from outside, that have moved to the village, come from the surrounding area, from places a few kilometers away. If you ask them where they are from, they will tell you, that they are not from Walkersdorf. They will explain to you where they are from. They will point to a hill about a kilometer away and tell you, that originally they come from the village behind that hill.

If you look on a map, Walkersdorf is situated very centrally, between five European capitals. With a car it is possible to visit Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, Zagreb and Ljubljana, each on one day. It is not recommended to drive to Budapest and back on the same day, but it is possible. The other towns can easily be visited as a daytrip from Walkersdorf, although I do not think anyone would suggest you to do so. However, when living in Walkersdorf, these European capitals are far away. Even the neighbouring countries Hungary and Slovenia seem

far away. Only the local capital Graz, which is about 45 kilometers away, seems closely connected.

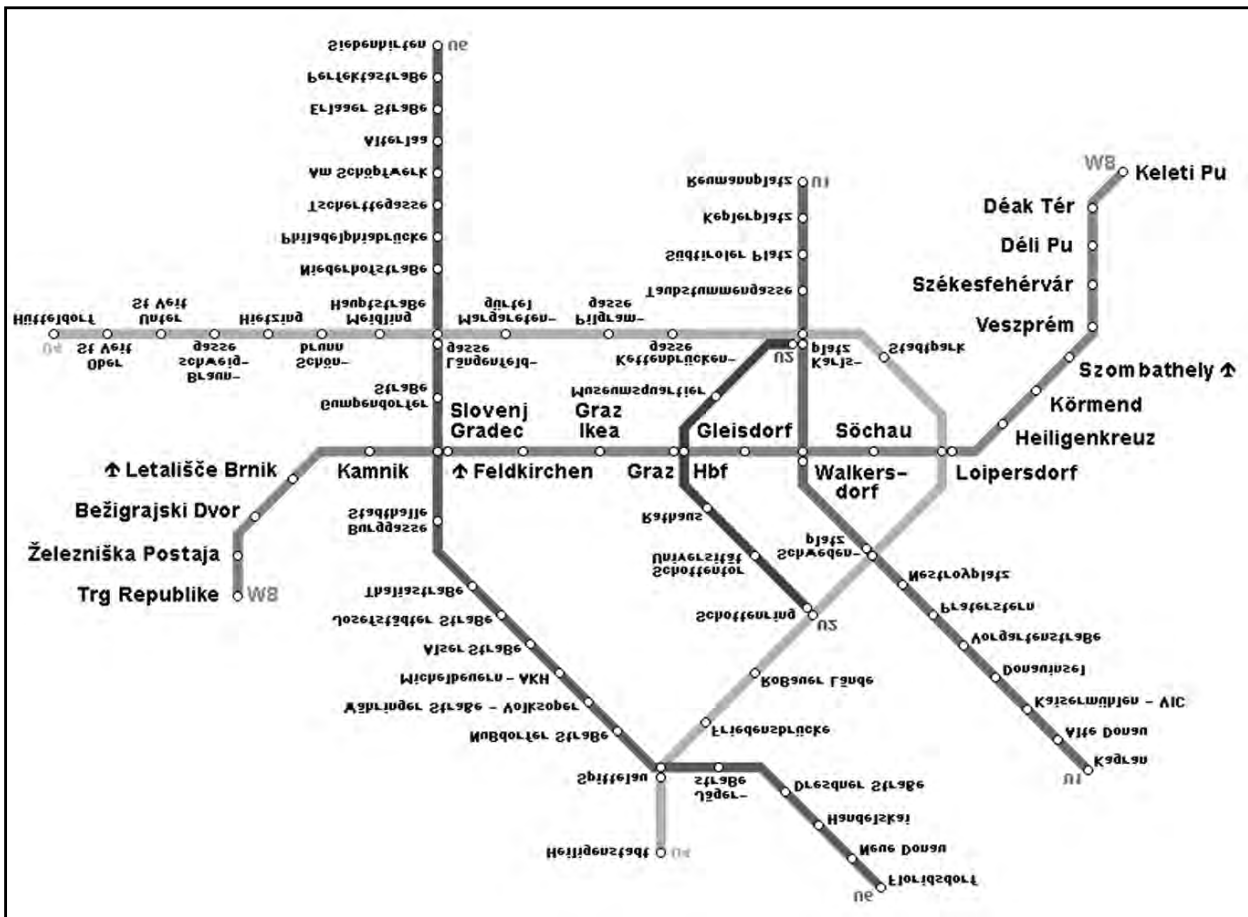
Anywhere in the world, people experience themselves as the center of their world. Everything turns around the place where you are, where you live, where you work. New impressions, new experiences and new contacts are always related to what we know, what we have already seen and what we have already experienced. The installation 'Walkersdorf — Center of the World' selects the small Austrian village 'Walkersdorf' as the center of the world. A media installation turns the dimensions around and creates a world that turns around the village.

Starting point for the installation was the idea to create a metro network that connects Walkersdorf directly with its neighbouring European capitals. Walkersdorf is very difficult to reach via public transport and a direct metro connection to the surrounding towns would be a great addition to the village. Inspired by the project 'Mesto pod Zemljo' by Slovenian video artist Miha Vipotnik, realized at the Famul Stuart School of Applied Arts in Ljubljana in 2006, I decided to create a metro network that connects Ljubljana and Budapest together.

I made the first sketches for this metro line in April 2006. The metro line 'W8' starts in the center of Ljubljana, goes via some small Slovenian towns to Graz, Ikea and then continues to Walkersdorf. From Walkersdorf it continues via some small Hungarian towns to Budapest.

For the future I plan to create a second line, that connects Bratislava and Vienna with Zagreb. The intersection point of the two lines will be in Walkersdorf. The main metro station, where you can change trains, will be located in the former wine cellar of one of the abandoned farms in the small village.

When I show my sketches to the local residents in Walkersdorf the people laugh and say that it would be great to have a direct metro connection to Graz. They immediately understand that the map is just a map and



that there is no metro line to Graz and that there will never be a metro line to Graz. But it would be great to have the possibility to enter the old wine cellar and just get on the train to the neighbouring towns.

Reactions were different when I showed the map to people outside of Walkersdorf. It was not so obvious to many that this was just a virtual map. There are many examples in the world, where metro lines are built in real, sometimes even in places where it seems almost impossible to create them. In Amsterdam, Netherlands, they are digging a tunnel for a new metro line right under the center of the old town. In Shanghai, China, they created a metro network within twelve years that has a total length of more than 225 kilometers with 8 lines and 161 stations. Maybe the idea to create a direct underground connection from Graz to Walkersdorf is not as virtual as it seems when walking around the quiet village.

The installation 'Walkersdorf — Center of the World', that is planned for 2008 in Walkersdorf, has been inspired by the sketches for the metro network, but is following its own path. Three young slovenian video artists, Pila Rusjan, Luka Dekleva and Luka Princic, will create a video installation in and around an old farm

in the village. Via small television transmitters, different television signals are transmitted around the farm. The signals can be received on small television sets. The signals will be transmitted on similar frequencies, which will cause them to interfere with each other. Visitors can create their own experience of the 'Center of the World' by walking around the place with a small, mobile television set, catching different signals while moving around.

The video installation forms the core of the metro station that will emerge in the old wine cellar of the farm. Mixed with other elements and interventions, the old farm will change into a lively collage of impressions from all over the world. Local visitors are invited to mix these impressions with their own views from the village, together creating an experience that could be interpreted as Walkersdorf as 'Center of the World'.

The installation 'Walkersdorf — Center of the World' is scheduled for June/July/August in Walkersdorf. During this time the video installation will be installed in and around an old farm in the village. A documentation of the project is planned to be available in October/November 2008.

Website: [www.wd8.org](http://www.wd8.org)