

MULTITUDES

The Empire we are faced with wields enormous powers of oppression and destruction, but that fact should not make us nostalgic in any way for the old forms of domination. The passage to Empire and its processes of globalization offer new possibilities to the forces of liberation. Globalization, of course, is not one thing, and the multiple processes that we recognize as globalization are not unified or univocal. Our political task, we will argue, is not simply to resist these processes but to reorganize them and redirect them toward new ends. The creative forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges. The struggles to contest and subvert Empire, as well as those to construct a real alternative, will thus take place on the imperial terrain itself—indeed, such new struggles have already begun to emerge. Through these struggles and many more like them, the multitude will have to invent new democratic forms and a new constituent power that will one day take us through and beyond Empire. (Excerpt from: Michael Hardt / Antonio Negri, Empire)

Geert Lovink, Florian Schneider New Rules Of The New Actonomy

Time is Running Out for Reformism. This is the golden age of irresistible activism. Accelerate your politics. Set a target you can reach within 30 seconds—and formulate the key ideas within 30 seconds. Then go out and do it. Do not despair. Get the bloody project up and then: hit hit hit. Be instantly seductive in your resistance. The moral firewalls of global capitalism are buggy as never before. Corporations are weakened because of their endemic dirty practices, mad for profits. The faster things are changing, the more radical we can act. The faster things are changing, the more radical we have to act.

The green-liberal idea of slowly changing capitalism from within no longer works. Not because the Third Way parties powers have "betrayed" the cause. No. Simply because their project is constantly running out of time. Global systems are in a state of permanent revolution, and so is subversive politics. Society is changing much faster than any of its institutions, including corporations. No one can keep up. There is no time anymore for decent planning. The duration of a plan, necessary for its implementation is simply not longer there. This mechanism turned the baby boomers into such unbearable regressive control freaks. There is no more time to go through the whole trajectory from research to implementation. Policy is reduced to panic response.

Government policy is reduced to panic response. For the complex society its enemies are the blueprints of five years ago. The future is constantly being re-defined, and re-negotiated. Global systems are in a state of permanent flux between revolution and reaction—and so is subversive politics. Society is changing much faster than any of its institutions can handle. In short: no one can keep up and here lies the competitive advantage of today's mobile actonomists.

Instead of crying over the disappearance of politics, the public, the revolution, etc. today's activists are focussing on the weakest link defining the overall performance of the system: the point where the corporate image materializes in the real world and leaves its ubiquity and abstract omnipresence. Shortcut the common deliberations about the dichotomy between real and virtual. Get into more sophisticated dialectics. It's all linked anyway, with power defining the rules of access to resources (space, information or capital). Throw your pie, write your code. Visit their annual stockholders meeting, and do your god-damned research first. What counts is the damage done on the symbolic level, either real or virtual.

The new actonomy, equipped with pies and laptops, consists of thousands of bigger and smaller activities, which are all by themselves meaningful, manageable and sustainable. For this we do not need a General Plan, a singular portal website, or let alone a Party. It is enough to understand the new dynamics—and use them. Create and disseminate your message with all available logics, tools and media. The new actonomy involves a rigorous application of networking methods. It's diversity challenges the development of non-hierarchical, decentralized and deterritorialized applets and applications.

Laws of semiotic guerilla: hit and run, draw and withdraw, code and delete. Postulate precise and modest demands, which allows your foe a step back without losing it's face. Social movements of the last century were opposing the nation state and disclaimed it's power. In the new actonomy activists struggle against corporations and new

forms of global sovereignty. The goal is obviously not so much to gain institutional political power, rather to change the way how things are moving—and why. The principle aim is to make power ridiculous, unveil its corrupt nature in the most powerful, beautiful and aggressive symbolic language, then step back in order to make space for changes to set in. Let others do that job, if they wish so. There is no need for a direct dialogue in this phase. Exchanges on mediated levels will do. Complex societies have got plenty mediators and interfaces. Use them. Indirect contact with the power to be does not effect your radical agenda as long as you maintain and upgrade your own dignity, both as an acting individual and as a group.

Radical demands are not by default a sign of a dogmatic belief system (they can, of course). If formulated well they are strong signs, penetrating deeply into the confused postmodern subjectivity, so susceptible for catchy phrases, logos and brands. Invent and connect as much intentions, motivations, causalities as possible.

These days a well-designed content virus can easily reach millions overnight. Invest all your time to research how to design a robust meme which can travel through time and space, capable to operate within a variety of cultural contexts. The duality between 'small is beautiful' and 'subversive economies of scale' is constantly shifting. Low-tech money-free projects are charming, but in most cases lack the precision and creative power to strike at society's weakest link. Be ready to work with money. You will need it for the temporary setup.

Think in terms of efficiency. Use the staff and infrastructure on the site of your foe. Acting in the new actonomy means to cut the preliminaries and get to the point straight away. A campaign does not rely on ones own forces, but on those of your allies and opponents as well. Outsourcing is a weapon. It is a means of giving someone else the problems you cannot solve yourself. Remember that you won't get very far without a proper infrastructure such as offices, servers, legal frameworks to receive and pay money, etc. However, you can also treat these institutional requirements as flexible units. You do not need to own them, the only thing you need is temporary access so that you can set up the machine ensemble you need for that particular project.

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Invent and connect as much intentions, motivations, causalities as possible. Nowadays activists use multi-layered and multiple voice languages that reach out far beyond the immediate purpose of a campaign or a concrete struggle, and in doing so, they create a vision much larger than what is accessible right at the moment. This mechanism needs a re-assessment of rhizomatic micro-politics which sprung up in a response to the centralized macro politics of the decaying communist parties in the seventies.

Act in a definite space and with a definite force. Dramaturgy is all that matters. Precision campaigns consists of distinct episodes with a beginning and an ending, an either smooth or harsh escalation and a final showdown. Accept the laws of appearance and disappearance. Don't get

stuck in structures which are on the decline. Be ready to move on, taking with you the (access to) infrastructure of the previous round. Action is taking place in a variety of locations and thus refers in a positive way to a new stage of people's globalization from below. One that is not just an empty, endlessly extended market, but full of energy.

Refuse to be blackmailed. If attacked, make one step aside or ahead. Don't panic. Take all the options into account. No one needs cyberheroes, you are not a lone hacker anymore. The attack maybe be done by a single person but remember we are many. The corporate response may be harder than you expect. It may be better to evade a direct confrontation, but don't trust the media and the mediators. Ignore their advice. In the end you are just another news item for them. If trouble hits the face, scale down, retreat, re-organize, get your network up, dig deep into the far corners of the Net—and then launch the counter campaign.

Program and compile subject oriented campaigns! These days a lot of people talk about a global uprising, which is only in the very beginning and definitely not limited to running behind the so called battles of the three acronyms: WTO, WB and IMF. But the urgent question of that movement is: what new types of subjectivity will raise out of the current struggles? Everybody knows, what's to be done, but who knows, what are we fighting for and why? Maybe it doesn't matter anymore: net.activism is of a charming fragility. In the end it means permanently revising and redefining all goals.

The revolution will be open source or not! Self-determination is something you should really share. As soon as you feel a certain strength on a certain field, you can make your power productive as positive, creative and innovative force. That power opens up new capacities, reducing again and again unexpected and incalculable effects.

Ignore history. Don't refer to any of your favorite predecessors. Hide your admiration for authors, artists and familiar styles. You do not need to legitimize yourself by quoting the right theorist or rapper. Be unscrupulously modern (meaning: ignore organized fashion, you are anyway busy with something else). Create and disseminate your message with all available logics, tools and media. The new actonomy involves a rigorous application of networking methods. It's diversity challenges the development of non-hierarchical, decentralized and deterritorialized applets and applications. In the meanwhile leave the preaching of the techno religion to others. Hide your admiration for everything new and cool. Just use it. Take the claim on the future away from corporations. Remember: they are the dinosaurs.

Read as many business literature as possible and don't be afraid it may effect you. It will. Having enough ethics in your guts you can deal with that bit of ideology. Remember that activism and entrepreneurial spirit have a remarkably lot in common. So what? Benefit from your unlimited capacity of metamorphosis. With the right spirit you can survive any appropriation. Free yourself from the idea that enemy concepts are compromising the struggle. You don't have to convince yourself, nor your foe. The challenge is to involve those, who are not yet joining the struggle. The challenge is to use resources, which may not belong to you, but which are virtually yours.

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<http://new.actonomy.org>