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make world paper#2



The World Social Forum, organized twice in Porto Alegre 2001 and 2002, not only prompted a flurry of autonomous self-organization, crossborder organization, and creative media interventions. It also initiated an intense process of analysis and reflection on the tricky question of a 'global' dynamic of self-organization.

Across continents and movement traditions, a few key terms continue to re-emerge as focal points for reflection - above all the status of sovereignty and the limitations of a sovereign logic of organization, as well as the frustration with the various traditions of leftist representationalism. Activists have long ceased to simply march on the corporate and institutional bad guys of globalisation-as-usual. They have also begun to articulate alternative logics of organization and mercilessly sort through the archive of political pieties, challenging the dominance of an older leftist expertocracy at every juncture.

The words of Franco Barchiesi of Indymedia South Africa might well serve as a summary of this shared sentiment: "it was time for the new social movements to express the qualitatively new "biopolitical" nature of their struggle in terms of refusal not only of the identity and mystique of "national liberation", but also of the leadership practices of a left that has historically tended to reproduce subordination and discursive expropriation of the movements' grass-roots subjectivity."

In this issue we have brought together many different perspectives on the increasingly pressing questions of the 'movement' - its theory, its politics, its media and modes of organisation. The texts reproduced here add vibrancy, background and analysis to these ongoing debates, and irrespective of the diversity reflect that none of these issues can be treated in separation.

The first edition of this free newspaper appeared in October 2001, as a part of the Munich 'Make World' festival and exhibition that brought together activists, new media artists and theorists. The first paper dealt with responses to 911, migration, immaterial labour, free software and featured a number of art projects. The free paper format already has a certain tradition. Within our context it started with the nettime ZKP4 paper, produced for the nettime meeting in Ljubljana, May 1997. Another one appeared in Zagreb, August 1999. In the global edition of 'Bastard' a group of editors brought together critical texts related to the Kosovo conflict.

Within this 'tradition' the Make World paper#2 also works with the concept of collaborative text filtering. The amount of key texts and strategic debates on the Internet is overwhelming. There are so many interesting lists and weblogs. It is a potlatch of content. This abundance of material could drive one mad. Yet, it also makes selecting and editing much easier. There is less of a feel of censorship and exclusion. All the texts, in their full length, including responses, are available online.

The context of this issue is the summer and fall of 2002, defined by the growing threat of an US-led Iraq invasion. The texts for this issue were selected alongside some significant events of the last few months such as the noborder camp in Strasbourg, where between 2000 and 3000 activists met for discussions, actions and media interventions. But it may also be seen as a direct or indirect output from the work on the films and the online-platform "What's to be done?" <http://wastun.org> or the dark markets conference <http://darkmarkets.t0.or.at> in the beginning of October in Vienna. Last but not least the make-world paper#2 will be accompanied by live-streaming and mobile screening events during the European Social Forum in Florence.

website

<http://paper.make-world.org>

distribution

Paper#2 will be distributed for free at:

European Social Forum
6-10 november, 2002
Florence, IT
<http://www.fse-esf.org/>

Futuresonic
6-10 november, 2002
Manchester, UK
<http://www.futuresonic.com/>

World-Information.org
15 november-15 december, 2002
Amsterdam, NL
<http://www.world-information.org/>

what is to be done

A Documentary Series
Eikon-Sued Productions 2002

At the 2001 G8 summit in Genova, discontent with globalization-as-usual once again burst into the open as activists alerted the general public to a multiplicity of new types of political, economic, social, and cultural conflict.

The documentary series „What's to be done?“ explores a new dynamic of democratic involvement and political intervention, searches for contemporary forms of solidarity and self-organization, and features innovative examples of linking the local and the global from across the world.

Each documentary returns to the question of perspective, strategy, and the organizational logic of the movement. Four thinkers - Michael Hardt, Toni Negri, Saskia Sassen, and Franco 'Bifo' Berardi - reflect on the question at the heart of the series: "What is to be Done?"

A WORLD TO INVENT

Documentary by Florian Schneider
Germany 2002, 40 minutes

Four leading thinkers reflect on the (so-called) anti-globalization movement.

ALL IN WHITE - TUTE BIANCHE

Documentary by Adonella Marena
Italy 2002, 30 minutes

Two influential Tute Bianche-activists analyze possibilities for political intervention in Italy today.

DEPORTATION CLASS

Documentary by Kirsten Esch
Germany 2002, 30 minutes

A network of human-rights activists organizes an anti-deportation campaign against a major airline.

THE UNORGANIZEABLES

Documentary by Florian Schneider
Germany 2002, 35 minutes

Three examples of creative workplace struggle in California, where a new wave of migrant activism is revitalizing union culture.

HTTP://WASTUN.ORG

Online-Film Project
[to be continued]

First version of an online platform, which aims to continue the current debate on activism and democracy in different media formats and to interconnect the various theoretical and practical approaches across borders: from text and images, to links and background material, as well as the presentation of all four films, complemented with out-takes and updates.

order a tape

Tape orders of the **WHAT'S TO BE DONE** films should be sent by electronic mail to info@wastun.org or by snail mail to: EIKON-Sued GmbH, Birkerstr. 22, 80636 München/Germany. The tape with all four films costs 20 Euros.

A Virtual World is Possible: From Tactical Media to Digital Multitudes

Geert Lovink / Florian Schneider

We start with the current strategy debates of the so-called “anti-globalisation movement”, the biggest emerging political force for decades. In Part II we will look into strategies of critical new media culture in the post-speculative phase after dotcommania. Four phases of the global movement are becoming visible, all of which have distinct political, artistic and aesthetic qualities.

The 90s and tactical media activism

The term ‘tactical media’ arose in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall as a renaissance of media activism, blending old school political work and artists’ engagement with new technologies. The early nineties saw a growing awareness of gender issues, exponential growth of media industries and the increasing availability of cheap do-it-yourself equipment creating a new sense of self-awareness amongst activists, programmers, theorists, curators and artists. Media were no longer seen as merely tools for the Struggle, but experienced as virtual environments whose parameters were permanently ‘under construction’. This was the golden age of tactical media, open to issues of aesthetics and experimentation with alternative forms of story telling. However, these liberating techno practices did not immediately translate into visible social movements. Rather, they symbolized the celebration of media freedom, in itself a great political goal. The media used – from video, CD-ROM, cassettes, zines and flyers to music styles such as rap and techno – varied widely, as did the content. A commonly shared feeling was that politically motivated activities, be they art or research or advocacy work, were no longer part of a politically correct ghetto and could intervene in ‘pop culture’ without necessarily having to compromise with the ‘system.’ With everything up for negotiation, new coalitions could be formed. The current movements worldwide cannot be understood outside of the diverse and often very personal for digital freedom of expression.

99-01: The period of big mobilizations

By the end of the nineties the post-modern ‘time without movements’ had come to pass. The organized discontent against neo-liberalism, global warming policies, labour exploitation and numerous other issues converged. Equipped with networks and arguments, backed up by decades of research, a hybrid movement – wrongly labelled by mainstream media as ‘anti-globalisation’ – gained momentum. One of the particular features of this movement lies in its apparent inability and unwillingness to answer the question that is typical of any kind of movement on the rise or any generation on the move: what’s to be done? There was and there is no answer, no alternative – either strategic or tactical – to the existing world order, to the dominant mode of globalisation. And maybe this is the most important and liberating conclusion: there is no way back to the twentieth century, the protective nation state and the gruesome tragedies of the ‘left.’ It has been good to remember – but equally good to throw off – the past. The question ‘what’s to be done’ should not be read as an attempt to re-introduce some form of Leninist principles. The issues of strategy, organization and democracy belong to all times. We neither want to bring back old policies through the backdoor, nor do we think that this urgent question can be dismissed by invoking crimes committed under the banner of Lenin, however justified such arguments are. When Slavoj Žižek looks in the mirror he may see Father Lenin, but that’s not the case for everyone. It is possible to wake up from the nightmare of the past history of communism and (still) pose the question: what’s to be done? Can a ‘multitude’ of interests and backgrounds ask that question, or is the only agenda that defined by the summit calendar of world leaders and the business elite? Nevertheless, the movement has been growing rapidly. At first sight it appears to use a pretty boring and very traditional medium: the mass-mobilization of tens of thousands in the streets of Seattle, hundreds of thousands in the streets of Genoa. And yet, tactical media networks played an important role in it’s coming into being. From now on pluriformity of issues and identities was a given reality. Difference is here to stay and no longer needs to legitimize itself against higher authorities such as the Party, the Union or the Media. Compared to previous decades this is its biggest gain. The ‘multitudes’ are not a dream or some theoretical construct but a reality. If there is a strategy, it is not contradiction but complementary existence. Despite theoretical deliberations, there is no contradiction between the street and cyberspace. The one fuels the other. Protests against the WTO, neo-liberal EU policies, and party conventions are all staged in front of the gathered world press. Indymedia crops up as a parasite of the mainstream media. Instead of having to beg for attention, protests take place under the eyes of the world media during summits of politicians and business leaders, seeking

direct confrontation. Alternatively, symbolic sites are chosen such as border regions (East-West Europe, USA-Mexico) or refugee detention centres (Frankfurt airport, the centralized Eurocop database in Strasbourg, the Woomera detention centre in the Australian desert). Rather than just objecting to it, the global entitlement of the movement adds to the ruling mode of globalisation a new layer of globalisation from below.

Confusion and resignation after 9-11

At first glance, the future of the movement is a confusing and irritating one. Old-leftist grand vistas, explaining US imperialism and its aggressive unilateralist foreign policy, provided by Chomsky, Pilger and other baby boomers are consumed with interest but no longer give the bigger picture. In a polycentric world conspiracy theories can only provide temporary comfort for the confused. No moralist condemnation of capitalism is necessary as facts and events speak for themselves. People are driven to the street by the situation, not by an analysis (neither ours nor the one from Hardt & Negri). The few remaining leftists can no longer provide the movement with an ideology, as it works perfectly without one. “We don’t need your revolution.” Even the social movements of the 70s and 80s, locked up in their NGO structures, have a hard time keeping up. New social formations are taking possession of the streets and media spaces, without feeling the need of representation by some higher authority, not even the heterogenous committees gathering in Porto Alegre. So far this movement has been bound in clearly defined time/space coordinates. It still takes months to mobilize multitudes and organize the logistics, from buses and planes, camping grounds and hostels, to independent media centres. This movement is anything but spontaneous (and does not even claim to be so). The people that travel hundreds or thousands of miles to attend protest rallies are driven by real concerns, not by some romantic notion of socialism. The worn-out question: “reform or revolution?” sounds more like blackmail to provoke the politically correct answer. The contradiction between selfishness and altruism is also a false one. State-sponsored corporate globalisation affects everyone. International bodies such as the WTO, the Kyoto Agreement on global warming, or the privatisation of the energy sector are no longer abstract news items, dealt with by bureaucrats and (NGO) lobbyists. This political insight has been the major quantum leap of recent times. Is this then the Last International? No. There is no way back to the nation state, to traditional concepts of liberation, the logic of transgression and transcendence, exclusion and inclusion. Struggles are no longer projected onto a distant Other that begs for our moral support and money. We have finally arrived in the post-solidarity age. As a consequence, national liberation movements have been replaced by a by a new analysis of power, which is simultaneously incredibly abstract, symbolic and virtual, whilst terribly concrete, detailed and intimate.

Present challenge: liquidate the regressive third period of marginal moral protest

Luckily September 11 has had no immediate impact on the movement. The choice between Bush and Bin Laden was irrelevant. Both agendas were rejected as devastating fundamentalisms. The all too obvious question: “whose terror is worse?” was carefully avoided as it leads away from the pressing emergencies of everyday life: the struggle for a living wage, decent public transport, health care, water, etc. As both social democracy and really existing socialism depended heavily on the nation state a return to the 20th century sounds as disastrous as all the catastrophes it produced. The concept of a digital multitude is fundamentally different and based entirely on openness. Over the last few years the creative struggles of the multitudes have produced outputs on many different layers: the dialectics of open sources, open borders, open knowledge. Yet the deep penetration of the concepts of openness and freedom into the principle of struggle is by no means a compromise to the cynical and greedy neo-liberal class. Progressive movements have always dealt with a radical democratisation of the rules of access, decision-making and the sharing of gained capacities. Usually it started from an illegal or illegitimate common ground. Within the bounds of the analogue world it led to all sorts of cooperatives and self-organized enterprises, whose specific notions of justice were

based on efforts to circumvent the brutal regime of the market and on different ways of dealing with the scarcity of material resources. We’re not simply seeking proper equality on a digital level. We’re in the midst of a process that constitutes the totality of a revolutionary being, as global as it is digital. We have to develop ways of reading the raw data of the movements and struggles and ways to make their experimental knowledge legible; to encode and decode the algorithms of its singularity, nonconformity and non-confoundability; to invent, refresh and update the narratives and images of a truly global connectivity; to open the source code of all the circulating knowledge and install a virtual world. Bringing these efforts down to the level of production challenges new forms of subjectivity, which almost necessarily leads to the conclusion that everyone is an expert. The superflux of human resources and the brilliance of everyday experience get dramatically lost in the ‘academification’ of radical left theory. Rather the new ethical-aesthetic paradigm lives on in the pragmatic consciousness of affective labour, in the nerdy attitude of a digital working class, in the omnipresence of migrant struggles as well as many other border-crossing experiences, in deep notions of friendship within networked environments as well as the ‘real’ world.

II.

Let’s now look at strategies for Internet art & activism. Critical new media culture faces a tough climate of budget cuts in the cultural sector and a growing hostility and indifference towards new media. But hasn’t power shifted to cyberspace, as Critical Art Ensemble once claimed? Not so if we look at the countless street marches around the world. The Seattle movement against corporate globalisation appears to have gained momentum – both on the street and online. But can we really speak of a synergy between street protests and online ‘hacktivism’? No. But what they have in common is their (temporal) conceptual stage. Both real and virtual protests risk getting stuck at the level of a global ‘demo design,’ no longer grounded in actual topics and local situations. This means the movement never gets out of beta. At first glance, reconciling the virtual and the real seems to be an attractive rhetorical act. Radical pragmatists have often emphasized the embodiment of online networks in real-life society, dispensing with the real/virtual contradiction. Net activism, like the Internet itself, is always hybrid, a blend of old and new, haunted by geography, gender, race and other political factors. There is no pure disembodied zone of global communication, as the 90s cyber-mythology claimed. Equations such as street plus cyberspace, art meets science, and ‘techno-culture’ are all interesting interdisciplinary approaches but are proving to have little effect beyond the symbolic level of dialogue and discourse. The fact is that established disciplines are in a defensive mode.

The ‘new’ movements and media are not yet mature enough to question and challenge the powers that be. In a conservative climate, the claim to ‘embody the future’ becomes a weak and empty gesture. On the other hand, the call of many artists and activists to return to “real life” does not provide us with a solution to how alternative new media models can be raised to the level of mass (pop) culture. Yes, street demonstrations raise solidarity levels and lift us up from the daily solitude of one-way media interfaces. Despite September 11 and its right-wing political fallout, social movements worldwide are gaining importance and visibility. We should, however, ask the question “what comes after the demo version” of both new media and the movements? This isn’t the heady 60s. The negative, pure and modernist level of the “conceptual” has hit the hard wall of demo design as Peter Lunenfeld described it in his book ‘Snap to Grid’. The question becomes: how to jump beyond the prototype? What comes after the siege of yet another summit of CEOs and their politicians? How long can a movement grow and stay ‘virtual’? Or in IT terms, what comes after demo design, after the countless PowerPoint presentations, broadband trials and Flash animations? Will Linux ever break out of the geek ghetto? The feel-good factor of the open, ever growing crowd (Elias Canetti) will wear out; demo fatigue will set in. We could ask: does your Utopia version have a use-by date? Rather than making up yet another concept it is time to ask the question of how software, interfaces and alternative standards can be installed in society. Ideas may take the shape of a virus, but society can hit back

with even more successful immunization programs: appropriation, repression and neglect. We face a scalability crisis. Most movements and initiatives find themselves in a trap. The strategy of becoming “minor” (Guattari) is no longer a positive choice but the default option. Designing a successful cultural virus and getting millions of hits on your weblog will not bring you beyond the level of a short-lived ‘spectacle’. Culture jammers are no longer outlaws but should be seen as experts in guerrilla communication Today’s movements are in danger of getting stuck in self-satisfying protest mode.

With access to the political process effectively blocked, further mediation seems the only available option. However, gaining more and more “brand value” in terms of global awareness may turn out to be like overvalued stocks: it might pay off, it might turn out to be worthless. The pride of “We have always told you so” is boosting the morale of minority multitudes, but at the same time it delegates legitimate fights to the level of official “Truth and Reconciliation Commissions” (often parliamentary or Congressional), after the damage is done. Instead of arguing for “reconciliation” between the real and virtual we call here for a rigorous synthesis of social movements technology. Instead of taking the “the future is now” position derived from cyber-punk, a lot could be gained from a radical re-assessment of the techno revolutions of the last 10-15 years. For instance, if artists and activists can learn anything from the rise and subsequent fall of dot-com, it might be the importance of marketing. The eyeballs of the dotcom attention economy proved worthless. This is a terrain is of truly taboo knowledge. Dot-coms invested their entire venture capital in (old media) advertisement. Their belief that media-generated attention would automatically draw users in and turn them into customers was unfounded. The same could be said of activist sites. Information “forms” us. But new consciousness results less and less in measurable action.

Activists are only starting to understand the impact of this paradigm. What if information merely circles around in its own parallel world? What’s to be done if the street demonstration becomes part of the Spectacle? The increasing tensions and polarizations described here force us to question the limits of new media discourse. In the age of realtime global events Ezra Pound’s definition of art as the antenna of the human race shows its passive, responsive nature. Art no

longer initiates. One can be happy if it responds to contemporary conflicts at all and the new media arts sector is no exception. New media arts must be reconciled with its condition as a special effect of the hard and software developed years ago. Critical new media practices have been slow to respond to both the rise and fall of dotcommania. In the speculative heydays of new media culture (the early-mid 90s, before the rise of the World Wide Web), theorists and artists jumped eagerly on not yet existing and inaccessible technologies such as virtual reality. Cyberspace generated a rich collection of mythologies; issues of embodiment and identity were fiercely debated.

Only five years later, while Internet stocks were going through the roof, little was left of the initial excitement in intellectual and artistic circles. Experimental techno culture missed out on the funny money. Recently there has been a steady stagnation of new media cultures, both in terms of concepts and funding. With millions of new users flocking onto the Net, the arts can no longer keep up and withdraw into their own little world of festivals, mailing lists and workshops. Whereas new media arts institutions, begging for goodwill, still portray artists as working at the forefront of technological developments, the reality is a different one. Multi-disciplinary goodwill is at an all time low. At best, the artist’s new media products are ‘demo design’ as described by Lunenfeld. Often it does not even reach that level. New media arts, as defined by its few institutions rarely reach audiences outside of its own electronic arts subculture.

The heroic fight for the establishment of a self-referential ‘new media arts system’ through a frantic differentiation of works, concepts and traditions, might be called a dead-end street. The acceptance of new media by leading museums and collectors will simply not happen. Why wait a few decades anyway? Why exhibit net art in white cubes? The majority of the new media organizations such as ZKM, the Ars Electronica Centre, ISEA, ICC or ACMI are hopeless in their techno innocence, being neither critical nor radically utopian in their approach. Hence, the new media arts sector, despite its steady growth, is getting increasingly isolated, incapable of addressing the issues of today’s globalised world, dominated by (the war against) terror. Let’s face it, technology is no longer ‘new’, the markets are down and out and no one wants know about it anymore. Its little wonder the contemporary (visual) arts world is continuing its decade-old boycott of (interac-

and the same time a legal and a technical distinction. Information emerges as a separate realm, a world apart as Lovink has perceptively argued for some time. But he has not stopped to inquire is to how or why, and without first asking how or why we cannot get far with the big question,: what is to be done. So let’s look closely at the way the development of a *vectoral* technology has made possible a relative separation from its materiality. Which is not to say that information is immaterial. Rather, it has an *abstract* relation to the material. It no longer matters to its integrity as information whether it is embodied in this cd-rom or that flashcard or that stack of paper.

A virtual continent

A virtual world is indeed possible, precisely because of this coming into existence of abstract information. But what is information? The product of a labor of encoding and decoding. Just as the commodity economy made manual labor abstract in the machine age, so too it has made intellectual labor abstract in the information age. But the virtual world finds itself constrained by a form of property alien to it. No longer confine to a particular materiality, information really does yearn to be free. But it is not free, it is everywhere in chains. It is forced into the constraint of a very new creation -- intellectual property. On the ruins of the commons that copyright and patent were once supposed to guarantee arises an absolute privatisation of information as property. And so, with a whole new -- virtual -- continent to claim as its own, class power finds a new basis, and remakes that other world, the everyday world, in its image. The abstraction of information from materiality as a legal and technical possibility becomes the shape of the world. A world in which the mere embodiment of a concept in a commodity can be consigned to bidding wars between the

tive) new media works in galleries, biennales and shows like Documenta XI. A critical reassessment of the role of arts and culture within today’s network society seems necessary. Let’s go beyond the ‘tactical’ intentions of the players involved. The artist-engineer, tinkering on alternative human-machine interfaces, social software or digital aesthetics has effectively been operating in a self-imposed vacuum. Science and business have successfully ignored the creative community. Worse still, artists have been actively sidelined in the name of ‘usability’, pushed by a backlash movement against web design led by the IT-guru Jakob Nielsen. The revolt against usability is about to happen. Lawrence Lessig argues that Internet innovation is in danger. The younger generation is turning its back on new media arts questions and if involved at all, operate as anti-corporate activists. After the dotcom crash the Internet has rapidly lost its imaginative attraction. File swapping and cell phones can only temporarily fill up the vacuum; the once so glamorous gadgets are becoming part of everyday life. This long-term tendency, now accelerating, seriously undermines future claims of new media.

Another issue concerns generations. With video and expensive interactive installations being the domain of the ‘68 baby boomers, the generation of ‘89 has embraced the free Internet. But the Net turned out to be a trap for them. Whereas assets, positions and power remain in the hands of the ageing baby boomers, the gamble on the rise of new media did not pay off. After venture capital has melted away, there is still no sustainable revenue system in place for the Internet. The slow working educational bureaucracies have not yet grasped the new media malaise. Universities are still in the process of establishing new media departments. But that will come to a halt at some point. The fifty-something tenured chairs and vice-chancellors must feel good about their persistent sabotage. What’s so new about new media anyway? Technology was hype after all, promoted by the criminals of Enron and WorldCom. It is sufficient for students to do a bit of email and web surfing, safeguarded within a filtered, controlled intranet. In the face of this rising technocynicism we urgently need to analyse the ideology of the greedy 90s and its techno-libertarianism. If we don’t disassociate new media quickly from the previous decade, the isolation of the new media sector will sooner or later result in its death. Let’s transform the new media buzz into something more interesting altogether - before others do it for us.

desperate. This bifurcation affects both the agricultural and the manufacturing economies. The patents on seed stocks are of a piece with the copyrights on designer logos. Both are a means by which a new class power asserts its place in the world, based not on the ownership of land or of physical manufacturing plant, but in the concepts and designs on which the world will be set to labour.

In the overdeveloped world, one discovers symptoms of the same emerging totality. Workers in manufacturing struggle to hang on to jobs in an economy that they alone are no longer the only ones equipped to do. So called 'state monopoly capital' is a mere husk of its former self. The emerging class interest has a very different relation to the state. Meanwhile, there are the various phenomena of the 'new economy'. While the bubble may have burst, there is a risk in too low an evaluation of the significance of the media and communication revolution as an over reaction to the excessive optimism of the 90s. Just as railways and the telegraph created a boom and bust, but also created an enduring geography of economic and strategic power, so too has the latest, digital, phase in the development of the vector. One should not right off the military dimension to the new class power quite as readily as Lovink and Schneider do, either. On the one hand it is the old oil-power politics. But there is a new dimension, a new confidence in the ability to use the new vectoral military technologies as a cheap and efficient way of achieving global redistributions of power. The same abstraction of information from materiality that happens in technology and is sanctioned by intellectual property law is happening in military technology. The military wing of the new class interest wants a 'new' new world order to ratify its exercise. This is not your grandparents ruling class we are

Touching an elephant

Reply by McKenzie Wark

Lovink and Schneider ask the right question in 'A Virtual World is Possible'. What is to be done? Unfortunately, they have not done it. Yes, there is a need for a political position outside of the dialectic of the street and cyberspace. Yes, there is a need for a new position for new media outside of the dialectic of the media market and the art market. And yes, the place to look is in deconstructing the techno-libertarian ideologies of the 90s. But what is required at this juncture is a tool with which to prise it open to discover how it worked.

tions between history and mythology. The only way to explore them is by playing games with history. You see, we don't write the usual kind of "ucronic" speculative fiction, like P.K. Dick's "The Man In The High Castle" (except "Havana Glam", which is a sci-fi divertissement about 1970's glam rock). We prefer to investigate the "possibility" of a bifurcation in history, the moment when history "might have gone" in a different direction. We are not interested in depicting the bifurcation itself, or its consequences. We usually think of an historical period which seems fascinating to us, then we spend months watching microfilms, reading sources, doing research, writing down all kinds of stuff, then the brainstorm comes and it lasts several weeks. We have hallucinations, sort of. Historical research is like peyote to us. After we recover from all the shocks and flashes, we start to write.

The mirror is one of the core themes of the novel.

Rather

than opposing the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre to the World Economic Forum in New York, it is more revealing to imagine it as the distant offspring of the historic Bandung Conference that took place in Indonesia in 1955. Both were conceived as attempts to counter the dominant world order: colonialism and the oppressive Cold War binary in the case of Bandung, and the rule of capitalist globalization in that of Porto Alegre. The Bandung Conference, which brought together leaders primarily from Asia and Africa, revealed in a dramatic way the racial dimension of the colonial and Cold War world order, which Richard Wright famously described as being divided by the 'colour curtain'. Porto Alegre, in contrast, was a predominantly white event. There were relatively few participants from Asia and Africa, and the racial differences of the Americas were dramatically underrepresented. This points toward a continuing task facing those gathered at Porto Alegre: to globalize further the movements, both within each society and across the world. Whereas Bandung was conducted by a small group of national political leaders and representatives, Porto Alegre was populated by a swarming multitude and a network of movements. This multitude of protagonists is the great novelty of the World Social Forum, and central to the hope it offers for the future.

From Seattle to Genoa

The first and dominant impression of the Forum was its overflowing enormity; not so much the number of people there-the organizers say 80,000 participated-but rather the number of events, encounters and happenings. The Forum was unknowable, chaotic, dispersive. And that overabundance created an exhilaration in everyone, at being lost in a sea of people from so many parts of the world who are working similarly against the present form of capitalist globalization. This open encounter was the most important element of Porto Alegre. Even though the Forum was limited in some important respects-socially and geographically, to name two-it was nonetheless an opportunity to globalize further the cycle of struggles that have stretched from Seattle to Genoa, which have been conducted by a network of movements thus far confined, by and large, to the North Atlantic. Recognizing the commonality of their projects with those in other parts of the world is the first step toward expanding the network of movements, or linking one network to another. This recognition, indeed, is primarily responsible for the happy, celebratory atmosphere of the Forum.

The encounter should, however, reveal and address not only the common projects and desires, but also the differences of those involved-differences of material conditions and political orientation. The various movements across the globe cannot simply connect to each other as they are, but must rather be transformed by the encounter through a kind of mutual adequation. What kind of transformations are necessary for the Euro-American globalization movements and the Latin American movements, not to become the same, or even to unite, but to link together in an expanding common network? In fact, the very same dispersive, overflowing quality of the Forum that created the euphoria of commonality also effec-

A glorious Tv, the McGuffin, travels throughout the novel, "a mute witness of any sort of violences and squalors". Everybody wants to see the first Tv programs but nobody knows how to turn the Tv on. But they do not realize that they are already on the screen, in the shape of pale reflected shadows. How can we compare this '50s quest for dreaming with contemporary banal reality-fictions such as "Big Brother"? What is the function of television today and who take cares of our dreams and nightmares?

In Italy the 1950's were the dawn of the TV era, people wanted to dream because the situation was very tough, there was violence everywhere. The 1990's (we started to work on 54 in 1999) were the laboratory of the network-propelled "Big Brother"-fuelled semio-fascism that turned a 40-year long quest for dreaming inside out, reflecting all nightmares ("Criminals are everywhere!", "What do all of these fucking Moroccans and Albanians want from us?") and rotten beliefs ("the

tively displaced the terrain on which such differences and conflicts could be confronted.

Anti-capitalism and national sovereignty

The Porto Alegre Forum was in this sense perhaps too happy, too celebratory and not conflictual enough. The most important political difference cutting across the entire Forum concerned the role of national sovereignty. There are two primary positions in the response to today's dominant forces of globalization: either one can work to reinforce the sovereignty of nation-states as a defensive barrier against the control of foreign and global capital, or one can strive towards a non-national alternative to the present form of globalization that is equally global. The first poses neoliberalism as the primary analytical category, viewing the enemy as unrestricted global capitalist activity with weak state controls; the second is more clearly posed against capital itself, whether state-regulated or not. The first might rightly be called an anti-globalization position, in so far as national sovereignties, even if linked by international solidarity, serve to limit and regulate the forces of capitalist globalization. National liberation thus remains for this position the ultimate goal, as it was for the old anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggles. The second, in contrast, opposes any national solutions and seeks instead a democratic globalization.

The first position occupied the most visible and dominant spaces of the Porto Alegre Forum; it was represented in the large plenary sessions, repeated by the official spokespeople, and reported in the press. The non-sovereign, alternative globalization position, in contrast, was minoritarian at the Forum-not in quantitative terms but in terms of representation; in fact, the majority of the participants in the Forum may well have occupied this minoritarian position. First, the various movements that have conducted the protests from Seattle to Genoa are generally oriented towards non-national solutions. Indeed, the centralized structure of state sovereignty itself runs counter to the horizontal network-form that the movements have developed. Second, the Argentinian movements that have sprung up in response to the present financial crisis, organized in neighbourhood and city-wide delegate assemblies, are similarly antagonistic to proposals of national sovereignty. Their slogans call for getting rid, not just of one politician, but all of them- *que se vayan todos*: the entire political class. And finally, at the base of the various parties and organizations present at the Forum the sentiment is much more hostile to proposals of national sovereignty than at the top. This may be particularly true of ATTAC, a hybrid organization whose head, especially in France, mingles with traditional politicians, whereas its feet are firmly grounded in the movements.

The division between the sovereignty, anti-globalization position and the non-sovereign, alternative globalization position is therefore not best understood in geographical terms. It does not map the divisions between North and South or First World and Third. The conflict corresponds rather to two different forms of political organization. The traditional parties and centralized campaigns generally occupy the national sovereignty pole, whereas the new movements organized in horizontal networks tend to cluster at the non-

sovereign pole. And within traditional, centralized organizations, the top tends toward sovereignty and the base away. It is no surprise, perhaps, that those in positions of power would be most interested in state sovereignty and those excluded least. This may help to explain, how the national sovereignty, anti-globalization position could dominate the representations of the Forum even though the majority of the participants tend rather toward the perspective of a non-national alternative globalization.

As a concrete illustration of this political and ideological difference, one can imagine the responses to the current economic crisis in Argentina that logically follow from each of these positions. Indeed that crisis loomed over the entire Forum, like a threatening premonition of a chain of economic disasters to come. The first position would point to the fact that the Argentinian debacle was caused by the forces of global capital and the policies of the IMF, along with the other supranational institutions that undermine national sovereignty. The logical oppositional response should thus be to reinforce the national sovereignty of Argentina (and other nation-states) against these destabilizing external forces. The second position would identify the same causes of the crisis, but insist that a national solution is neither possible nor desirable. The alternative to the rule of global capital and its institutions will only be found at an equally global level, by a global democratic movement. The practical experiments in democracy taking place today at neighbourhood and city levels in Argentina, for example, pose a necessary continuity between the democratization of Argentina and the democratization of the global system. Of course, neither of these perspectives provides an adequate recipe for an immediate solution to the crisis that would circumvent IMF prescriptions. They rather present different political strategies for action today that seek, in the course of time, to develop real alternatives to the current form of global rule.

Parties vs networks

In a previous period we could have staged an old-style ideological confrontation between the two positions. The first could accuse the second of playing into the hands of neoliberalism, undermining state sovereignty and paving the way for further globalization: politics can only be effectively conducted on the national terrain and within the nation-state. And the second could reply that national regimes and other forms of sovereignty, corrupt and oppressive as they are, are merely obstacles to the global democracy that we seek. But this kind of confrontation could not take place at Porto Alegre-in part because of the dispersive nature of the event, which tended to displace conflicts, and in part because the sovereignty position so successfully occupied the central representations that no contest was possible.

But the more important reason for a lack of confrontation may have had to do with the organizational forms that correspond to the two positions. The traditional parties and centralized organizations have spokespeople who represent them and conduct their battles, but no one speaks for a network. How do you argue with a network? One of the basic characteristics of the network form is

Porto Alegre - Today's Bandung?

Michael Hardt

The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre has become symbolic of

the forces beginning to shape a front of common resistance to the

pattern of imperial globalization. Yet its character and composi-

tion remain little understood. Michael Hardt analyses the debates

within it, and their political potential.



struggles, just like we do it with mp3-files or in the field of software development? It may not sound as romantic as before. And truly it doesn't mean, that the revolution will be napsterized, brought to court and sold to Bertelsmann. But isn't it time to look at what comes beyond communication and how current struggles are being fought, how to bypass the dead-end nation state and how local struggles are shortcutted to the global and don't need a common ground or territory?

Indeed the superiority of the shift of postmodernism and poststructuralism to boring media theory all over the 90ies may have spoiled the ground. But the two guys gave so many interviews in the last two years, that we could easily start to think about it ourselves ;)

Date: Mon, 29 Apr 2002 20:41:10 +1000
From: Steve Wright - pmargin@froggy.com.au
Subject: Re: [Generation_online] Communicating struggles

I think that a 'common language' that flattens things out the (allegedly) lowest common denominator would be disastrous today, as it was in the past (the Comintern is a tragic example). And the sort of 'aping' you cite is also self-defeating, because it comes across as silly apart from anything else. Is a 'common language' the wrong way of posing the problem? Perhaps I'm naive in thinking that something different is possible from what you raise. Is there a better way of talking about means of communication that allows those in struggle to listen to each other? Maybe some examples would help - eg how did the wildcat form of strike circulate around Europe from the 1950s onwards?

Date: Mon, 29 Apr 2002 10:46:11 -0400
From: Ron Day <ronday@wayne.edu>
Subject: Re: [Generation_online] Communicating struggles

I'm wondering what the relationship is between this notion of a common language and H&N's (and particularly, Negri's in _Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitudo_) notion of a common concept or name. The first seems to be demanding a language that can translate, and thus, an implicit notion of a common language that precedes the actual events. The latter, however, are constitutive of the possibility for events, or at least, for their repetition. In the first, there seems to be a language that is prior to a common name, for the latter, (again, reading Negri's _Kairos_), materials, objects, non linguistically-explicit affects are prior to a common name (which, possibly (according to my reading) would come from the in-common attributes of body and thought (for humans, and possibly, with other animals sharing these attributes of substance, as well)).

From: "Matteo" <swerve@onetel.net.uk>
Subject: Re: [Generation_online] Communicating struggles
Date: Wed, 1 May 2002 08:07:03 +0100

I'm not entirely sure what you mean by prior... logically prior, temporally prior, ontologically prior? It seems to me that the whole argument of the book (Kairos) is to suggest that language and being are constructed in concert through and in the commonality of the multitude - although this again risks instituting a hierarchy that Negri does his best to negate. Language is a form of the common (i.e. that expresses the common), and a form which constructs the common itself. Incommunicability on this model, would be the failure to construct in common, or to construct the common...

Date: Wed, 30 Jan 2002 16:55:23 -0800 (PST)
From: Thomas Seay <entheogens@yahoo.com>
Subject: Re: [Generation_online] Readings and Discussions

Since N&H begin this section with a discussion of imperialism, I would like for some of us to address a seemingly simple question: what are the differences and similarities between Empire and imperialism? And by imperialism, I mean the classical "Leninist" definition having the following characteristics: (1) The export of capital becomes of prime importance along with the export of commodities (2) Production and distribution become centralized into great trusts or cartels. (3) Banking and industrial capital become merged (4) the capitalist powers divide the world into spheres of influence (5) this division is com-

pleted, implying a future intercapitalist struggle

From: geert lovink <geert@desk.nl>
Subject: Re: [Generation_online] Readings and Discussions
Date: Thu, 31 Jan 2002 22:55:23 +1100

I would like to contribute a specific case, from Bosnia. The question here is: how could the behavior of the United States be qualified in this case? There is a somewhat similar discussion in the case of America's resistance against the International Court of Justice. Is the USA Empire? Is the USA part of Empire? Or is the USA above, or rather, beyond Empire?

Date: Thu, 31 Jan 2002 07:41:05 -0500
From: Keith Hart <HART_KEITH@compuserve.com>
Subject: Re: [Generation_online] Readings and Discussions

>Is the USA Empire? Is the USA part of Empire? Or is the USA above, or rather, beyond Empire?<

Or, to ask the same question in a historical way, has the Bush regime abandoned the project of collective empire undertaken by the USA after 1945? And does that make the Afghan war an act of old-style imperialism? The US has always been an imperialist power of the traditional sort in Central America and points South. It operated with racist proxies in Southern Africa. But it chose to build up Western Europe after the second world war, taught them who was boss over Suez and generally included them in Eurasian adventures up to Kosovo. Bush's unilateralism was evident before September 11th and has been even more marked since. The relationship of the USA to empire today ('administering the global society of control') is worth investigating with some conceptual clarity.

From: geert lovink <geert@desk.nl>
Subject: Re: [Generation_online] u.s. empire
Date: Sat, 2 Feb 2002 19:53:06 +1100

Sure. I have read the book. But Empire not the Bible, not the Answer to All your Questions. And the situation can change. Arguably Empire is a pre-1989 book, from the late cold war period (especially if you look at the theoretical constructs it uses--Negri is from that period). At best it is a book of the worry-free Clinton years. Not real nineties in my taste, let alone post 911. It is for certain pre Internet and new media. In that period the situation can change. I suppose that why we discuss things here and use the book as a source of inspiration and reference. I think the relation between USA and Empire is constantly changing, highly fluid.

From: "Erik" <erikempson@wanadoo.fr>
Subject: RE: [Generation_online] u.s. empire
Date: Sat, 2 Feb 2002 18:51:38 -0000

My instinct is to say, Hardt and Negri's comments withstanding, one conclusion of the general tendency of their analysis would be that it is increasingly less fruitful to see the USA as a distinct entity, in respect to its relations to Empire as a whole. One implication of the colonisation of its cultural capital has been that to varying degrees, other 'states' have internalised various aspects of the US culture as if it were its own. With 9/11 for example not only did various governments all want a piece of the drama, but at various points whole sections of media were without complication handed over to direct transmission from the american media giants. The point is that aspects of America have been assimilated by the rest of the world, and does this change the nature of America? However one of the messages repeated time and time again, and reflecting for me the Bougeoisie's own feelings of the crisis of the integrity of the nation state, was that America was now fully implicated in the affairs of the world. From the point of view of statehood and one of its characteristics being the capacity to police effectively ones own borders, this is clearly disingratiating not in spite of but because of its hegemonic agenda. America might be able to self sustain economically within its own frontiers, but the dynamic of capitalist expansion drives its capital outwards as a force that can and will be steered to suit other interests. Again one result of postfordism which roughly correlates to Empire has been the expansion of the communications industry which has opened up innumerable portals whereby those frontiers could be breached. This is not to say that USA does and can still operate

as a bloc, but this is in tension with its own needs for economic expansion. That it plays a dominant role in Empire is unquestionable, but then to return to the original questions about Lenin's imperialism, this too was an economic periodisation, and not to be understood simply as a form of militarism. I always understood America intervened in Bosnia to keep various European countries own international agendas in check. That there is a significant change with the Bush administration, I don't know, but I'd stab a guess that the current campaign of vengeance would have been conducted by the previous government with a much more nuanced collaborative face. I do remember that the Clinton government insisted that it was going to concentrate on domestic issues b4 plunging headlong into a series of international conflicts, which left a lot of people dead under the auspices of democracy, and 'restoration of hope' and the same kind of bullshit humanitarianism that comes up with pap like 'infinite justice' and 'enduring freedom' - indeed whenever non-American leaders repeat this tripe it is normally with a bit of a smirk, because they know damn well it is a kind of licence to pursue their own agendas under their own phraseology. In so far as we can theorise the USA outside of the world in which it operates, which is not just of its making, I think it is right to say the relation is a fluid one. However I don't think the authors of empire would disagree, and I would say that as an intervention in politics, the point of the book Empire was to try to give a new political shape to practice for what had previously been primarily theorised as 'politics from below'. It is a generality or an 'abstract totality' to use a Marxian phrase, yet provides a framework for shared but different labours to concretise the thesis -(it is this spirit of the book that I admire most) - though its content might or might not gel with competing conceptualisations at a different level of abstraction.

From: <swerve@mail02.onetel.net.uk>
Date: Sun, 3 Feb 2002 13:33:32 GMT
Subject: Re: [Generation_online] u.s. empire

Geert, in what way is it a 'pre-1989' book? Does the concept of Empire make sense in a world that is effectively divided into two blocks? A pre-internet book? Hardt would have been about 17-18 in 'pre-commercialisation of internet' time. And which particular 'theoretical construct' that Negri uses is of the 'late cold war period'? Certainly not 'Empire' or 'multitude', perhaps you could expand.

Erik, I agree on the whole with your analysis, although I think it's also important to stress that the Emergence of Empire is a tendency - and though I can't remember much on this (if anything) in the book, I think a number of counter-vailing tendencies to the formation of Empire are undoubtedly at work, sometimes within the very same institutions.

For example, there are undoubtedly a number of cross overs between national military personnel and departments and those of NATO, and am sure they play different roles in respect to Empire according to their specific location within each department, and depending on the particular conflict and how the 'division of labour' of the national regimes is parcelled out ... in short I'm sure the process has a number of schizoid aspects. It will hardly be a unitary, linear process. Nevertheless, it seems to me that although the 'war on terrorism' looks, in many ways, like old style imperialism, it also seems to me evident that that the US is simply not able to cover all bases at once and needs intelligence, and support from numerous other partners... It cannot go it alone, nor does it wish to (pace old imperialism). It is also questionable for how long global capital will accept the perpetual extension and exporting of conflict... which may be useful for the arms industry, but not many other areas of production and trade.

From: geert lovink <geert@desk.nl>
Subject: Re: [Generation_online] Re: Generation_online digest, Vol 1 #73 - 3 msgs
Date: Mon, 4 Feb 2002 09:51:21 +1100

With pre-1989 I mean that a lot of the fight are related to the 1968 generation and their problems. A lot of the writings of D/G, Foucault and Negri, for instance, is related to get away of homogeneous, centralized, 'stalinist' policies of the PCF which dominated the French left for so many decades. With that came the rise of 'rhi-

zomatic' new social movements (which have now become institutionalized, tamed NGOs). The liberating concepts of Mille Plateaux and Empire are liberating a certain generation of something. '1989' is not just a date. It is a major shift in world politics, it marks the true rise of Empire, in a globalized world 'without alternatives' (at least, that's how it is presented to us). It also marks a final liberation of the dark ages of communist party rule over a lot of social struggles worldwide and a renewed effort to redefine what radical social change could look like in the global media age. To say that my questions are closing debates seems a bit strange if you look at the lively and lengthy responses. I am writing books myself and experience at first hand how fast they can become outdated (or at least parts of them). Books summarize long periods of reflections. However, the world is speeding up at such an incredible rate that it is indeed really necessary to constantly rethink the concepts, in particular the relation between Empire and US policy. Besides recent post-911 changes in US policy there are other tensions such as the US policy towards glo-

bal warming and the Kyoto agreement, the debate over the 'status aparte' for the USA related to the International Court of Justice or that tiny case in Bosnia which I referred to. These could all be case studies to reassess Empire, update it, if you wish.

Date: Sun, 3 Feb 2002 21:42:46 -0800 (PST)
From: Thomas Seay <entheogens@yahoo.com>
Subject: Re: [Generation_online] Re: Generation_online digest, Vol 1 #73 - 3 msgs

.My understanding of Empire is that it is an EMERGING tendency. That does not mean that contradictions between the various countries do not continue to manifest themselves. Bush and Cheney are very tied politically to oil interests and this fact determines their position on the Kyoto treaty. However, has the emergent tendency to have money circulate without any state control been eclipsed by the recent events? Has the tendency to create free trade between nations, with little or no state intervention, been eclipsed? I dont think so. Isn't the tendency towards Empire

still the dominant one? What we have is a situation of extreme complexity. It is not a pure state of Empire. Yes, we have the United States govt, which wants to attack Iraq, and France who is against that for its own reasons. But, in the main, they are agreed on the need for free trade and for the need to build a strong mobile army to kick ass any where in the world, regardless of national boundaries. Bush has played on nationalist sentiment here in the US, but the language is different. His speeches are not about the US against this or that country, but of a "coalition of the freedom-loving countries" against "the terrorists" or "the axis of evil". Of course, in times of "war", countries have built coalitions before. How is the Permanent Global War, now underway, different from others? Capital is in the main encumbered by the nation-state..But the nation-state is not like the cocoon that the Empire sheds one day like a butterfly in Summer.

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There

are [...] two primary positions in the response to today's dominant forces of globalization: either one can work to reinforce the sovereignty of nation-states as a defensive barrier against the control of foreign and global capital, or one can strive towards a non-national alternative to the present form of globalization that is equally global." [1] (Michael Hardt.)

'Rarely has the corruption of political and administrative life been so deeply corrosive; rarely has there been such a crisis of representation; rarely has disillusionment with democracy been so radical. When people talk about a "crisis of politics", they are effectively saying that the democratic State no longer functions - and that in fact it has become irreversibly corrupt in all its principles and organs; the division of powers; the principles of guarantee; the single individual powers; the rules of representation; the unitarian dynamic of powers; and the functions of legality, efficiency and administrative legitimacy. There has been talk of an "end of history," and if such a thing exists we might certainly identify it in the end of the constitutional dialectic to which liberalism and the mature capitalist State have tied us.' [2] (Antonio Negri.)

Discussions at Porto Alegre centred largely around organisation against destructive corporate practice, 'Third World' debt, and the general problem of global neo-liberal economic policy. But many regarded the way in which discussions were framed as suffering from a preponderance of party-political and state-centric interests amongst the WSF's organisers, particularly the PT (Workers' Party of Brazil, who used the WSF as a stage for their upcoming elections), ATTAC (with its close links to French politicians, notably Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who advocate strengthening national sovereignty as a solution to the problems of contemporary globalization), Le Monde Diplomatique, and the Association of Brazilian Businessmen for the Citizens. A wide range of WSF panels were composed of European politicians, legislators and NGO representatives, including Ministers from France, Belgium and Portugal who had only recently voted to support the attacks on Afghanistan and the present 'War on Terror'.

A Socialdemocratic Paradise?

This decoration of the Social Forum by the Center-Left politicians smacked to some of an opportunist polishing of progressive credentials (three of the official French delegates, for example, were running for Presidency at the time), and was vehemently protested by members of anti-capitalist groups like MRG Catalunya-International, inspired by the People's Global Action (PGA) [4], as well as 600 attendees of the alternative Jornadas Anarquistas - 'Anarchist Journeys' - who occupied a three-storey house in order to emphasise that, as one IMC (Independent Media Centre) poster put it, 'Porto Alegre isn't the social democratic paradise that the PT makes it out to be.' By way of confirmation of this position, later IMC posts reported that local police, under the command of the PT and dressed in full riot gear, quickly surrounded the house, nearly running over one squatter in their attempts to clear it.

Undoubtedly the question of whether the State

should properly be involved in resistance against neo-liberalism is one yet to be answered by many interested in limiting the patent deprivations of capitalism. The occupation of the most visible and dominant spaces of the Porto Alegre Forum by sovereigntist perspectives, and the accompanying disenfranchisement of the non-sovereigntist, horizontally organised political formations that make up the bedrock of today's anti-capital movement, quite simply prevented this question from being properly framed, let alone answered, at the Forum.

The commitment to multilateral, diverse organisation expressed in Porto Alegre's Call of the Social Movements [5], is important in this respect. Proposals at Porto Alegre that 2002's European Social Forum organise itself as an 'open meeting space for in-depth reflection, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and planning of effective action among entities and movements of civil society' [6] might be seen as answering, however weakly, the charges of statist/sovereigntist bias in the organisation of the WSF. Yet hopes that a proper dialogue between the two positions could take place within the ESF have been disappointed, as the terms of the ESF's organisation have once again presented themselves as problematic to many groups on precisely the same grounds as that of the WSF.

Dissatisfied Hopes

The ESF's organisation has been formulated largely by a co-operation between the Disobedienti (or 'Civil Disobedience', formerly known as the Tute Bianche / White Overalls), spearheaded by Antonio Negri, led by Luca Casarini and based in North East Italy, and the Rifondazione Comunista (RC), a national far-left group which splintered from the previously incumbent center-left party Democratici della Sinistra (DS), and which sits in Italian Parliament with roughly 6% of the national vote. Some regard this alliance between the statist-leftist RC, who have made it their open aim to 'contaminate, and be contaminated by' the anti-capital movement, and the 'Zapatist' Disobedienti to be rather an unholy one, especially since it has effectively bought the Blairite DS a direct role in the ESF's organisation. The Forum's location in Florence, locally ruled by the DS party, is not insignificant in this respect. The resources the DS are able to offer in Florence - a conference center, accomodation, satellite uplinks, and so on and so forth - are obviously attractive to the Disobedienti / RC. Conversely, by cooperating with the Disobedienti and providing access to its own tax-funded, party-political infrastructure and that of the DS, the Leninist RC is able to promote itself as being 'side by side' with active 'non-statist' anti-capital groups. And as at Porto Alegre, the organising Disobedienti/ Democratici della Sinistra / Rifondazione Comunista nexus has undoubtedly been able to allocate time, at the ESF, to groups that fit within the more traditional statist framework, with NGOs such as ATTAC once again looming large. Indeed, the ESF is beginning to look like a straightforward progression from Porto Alegre, a replay of the flocking of extra-parliamentary groups to a local arm of a statist power, this time in the shape of the Democratici della Sinistra rather than the Workers' Party of Brazil.

What is now being articulated in the weeks running up to the ESF is that this process of alliance-building, underway in Italy since the the Genoa Social Forum and the 2001 G8 summit and recently derided by the journal DeriveApprodi in its 'Open letter to the European movements', must not be allowed to bring the project of articulating non-state modes of resistance and alternatives to capitalism to a standstill. Many feel that the uncomfortable alliance between the highly heterogeneous elements organising the ESF, each with their very different histories and political cultures, will once again distort the discussions that urgently need to take place in Florence. It is in this context that calls a for a new plan for Florence have found voice, one which more closely follows the principles laid out in Porto Alegre's 'Call of the Social Movements.' People's Global Action, unwilling to turn its back completely on the ESF, which, after all, will be a moment of strong visibility in Europe, has been discussing at its recent European meetings producing a parallel space characterised by 'decentralized, horizontal, assembly-based, and anti-authoritarian' principles - the same principles through which PGA itself is supposed to be constituted - 'a space that would maintain its autonomy with respect to the 'official' space of the ESF, but at the same time remain connected, allowing for [...] intervention.' The idea is that this space would have 'one leg outside and another inside' the ESF, and that its participation in the ESF would take place through interventions in the context of thematic proposals in the official program, the incorporation of new issues, and discussion of the ESF itself as a political and organizational model.

A very recent meeting in Barcelona by a diverse collection of groups, squats, social centers, movements, and networks interested in the PGA plan concluded that the ambitions of this 'autonomous space' might not in fact be realised as conceived during this year's PGA meetings in Strasbourg and Leiden.[7] But it seems likely that the need to reflect upon and work through the processes of political production, to experiment with forms of expression and communication in the movement, will still be the foundation of some kind of concrete, alterior activity at the Forum. Ur@action Hub, the name under which this activity is now taking place, explains its project as 'the creation of a place of crossover cooperation where common projects can develop [...] bartering practices and ideas, sharing transnational horizontal networks, affirming new social and communication rights, reclaiming public spaces on the net and the city [and] agitating for new conflicts across constituent Europe.' [8] The content areas proposed for the Ur@action Hub will probably be less constitutive of the meetings here than the 'infrastructural', representational, processual and organisational issues that are becoming critical to the movement as a whole. One of the reasons for movement's effective political invisibility at the WSF is that traditional 'centralized' organizations have spokespeople who represent them and can be recognized; networks do not. The movement must solve the question of how to 'represent the unrepresentable' to prevent future WSFs from occurring. The questions of knowledge sharing, community decision making, possible infrastructures for many-to-many and peer-to-peer communications, and the status of

The European Social Forum: Sovereign and Multitude

Jamie King

From the 6th to the 10th of November 2002, the European Social Forum (ESF) will take place in Florence, Italy. This meeting of activists, NGOs and political groups follows the second World Social Forum (WSF) [3] which took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil during February last year and was attended by between 50,000 and 70,000 people.



sort of political portal was opening up-a gateway, a window, "a crack in history," to use Subcomandante Marcos's beautiful phrase - a sense of possibility, a blast of fresh air, oxygen rushing to the brain. These protests-which are actually week-long marathons of intense education on global politics, late-night strategy sessions in six-way simultaneous translation, festivals of music and street theatre-are like stepping into a parallel universe.

Even the heavy-handed security measures have been co-opted by activists into part of the message: the fences that surround the summits become metaphors for an economic model that exiles billions to poverty and exclusion. Confrontations are staged at the fence-but not only the ones involving sticks and bricks: tear-gas canisters have been flicked back with hockey sticks, water cannons have been irreverently

The expressed aim was to publicly call for the accommodation of illegal migrants and help with their entry into the country and their onward journeys, to call for work procurement and the organization of health care or facilitation for the school attendance of their children.

Much more than provocation, it was about the propagation, preparation and realization of practical and political support for people without regular papers as it had in fact already existed, but mostly secretly, for years. Public opinion in Germany seemed almost to forbid speaking of refugees and migrants in a terms other than swindlers, cut-rate workers or criminals. Thus in the 90s in Germany, hardly 6 months went by without serious restrictions in the laws: employment and occupational bans, reduction in maintenance costs, procedural and constitutional changes, not to mention the insidious rearmament of the East German border in the battle against illegal immigration and the so-called gangs of people smugglers. "No one is illegal" chose a fundamentally different perspective: the discussion was not of illegal immigrants and their supposed motivation, but of people who were systematically denied civil rights and above all the right to have rights at all. Numbers and statistics weren't ranted about, instead what was called for was what is normally a matter of course, but has meanwhile been declared a criminal offence: aiding and abetting illegal entry and residence.

The offence of not possessing regular documents does not turn the migrants into compliant creatures, unable to protest against the rapidly expanded apparatus of state repression and late capitalist relations of exploitation, so that in the end all they would have left would be begging for mercy. From the unspectacular attempts of self-organisation in the communities and lodgings, through the everyday resistance at the workplace or in deportation detention, up to spontaneous protest actions, there were no lack of concrete approaches,. However no political framework of reference existed either nor were there efficient structures in place that could actually question the political asylum discourse of clemency rights.

In Paris a few months previously, hundreds of undocumented immigrants - the so-called sans papiers - had occupied two churches, one shortly after the other, and thereby initiated one of the most important movements of the closing 20th century. Led by charismatic speakers the sans papiers dared to step out of the shadows: out of insecure disenfranchised work conditions as well as out of the dubious protection of the village structures in the foyers, into the light of a public that in the middle of the summer holiday season evidently had no other discussion topic.

The sans papiers movement ignited like a straw fire and the experiences from the battles in France quickly spread all over Europe. The strength and the astonishing self-confidence of the sans papiers expressed itself in their insistence on strict autonomy: those who didn't even exist in the eyes of the state, who weren't represented by any party or association, and who could not claim any common identity for themselves took fate into their own hands and decided themselves what further steps were to be taken. The exploding self-confidence of the sans papiers was coupled with a massive preparedness to discuss problems and an enormous willingness to co-operate with other social movements: the

challenged with toy water pistols and buzzing helicopters mocked with swarms of paper airplanes. These activists are quite serious in their desire to disrupt the current economic order, but their tactics reflect a dogged refusal to engage in classic power struggles: their goal is not to take power for themselves but to challenge power centralization on principle.

Other kinds of windows are opening as well, quiet conspiracies to reclaim privatized spaces and assets for public use. And once reclaimed, these spaces are also being remade. In neighbourhood assemblies, at city councils, in independent media centres, in community-run forests and farms, a new culture of vibrant direct democracy is emerging, one that is fuelled and strengthened by direct participation, not dampened and discouraged by passive spectatorship. As I write

trade unions fortified after the December strikes of 95, the emerging movement of the unemployed, intellectuals and a radicalising young support scene were alternately reliable partners in the multi-layered discussions.

At the time a reasonable assessment of the situation and ones own strength seemed to disallow even the dream of similar developments in Germany. Like in the USA, in Germany there were relatively well developed support structures for illegal refugees (inspired by the striking crisis of the freedom struggles in the third world and the onset of the migration movement towards the north), and these structures continued to exist drawing on the tradition and remnant motivation of the militant movements of the 80's. Since the middle of the 80s, starting with the asylum seekers' campaign of the revolutionary cells, the theoretical and practical implication of a new solidarity movement had already been thought out in many fragments, and tried to be forestalled forcibly. Many of the young autonomous leftists, experiencing and watching this wave of racist attacks that was staged in the wake of German reunification, considered for themselves options of political resistance and the postulates of anti-racist and anti-fascist counterculture. And yet, at the latest from the middle of the 90's, these battle fronts threatened to be buried under biographical fragments, growing specialisation, clandestine isolated work and political lethargy. The decimated energies had exhausted themselves in a fatal fixation on the state apparatus and its procedural methods.

In this situation "No one is illegal" made the suggestion of a "legalisation from below" which was decisively influenced by the events in Paris. The idea was to take the strategies and tactics from the struggles of the sans papiers and to transpose them more or less intact into the local context in this country and to generate from the particularities of the German situation as many new approaches for action as possible. The concept, at first hesitantly articulated, worked surprisingly well: often with not much more than a common slogan the most different of approaches associated with one another without entering into the otherwise usual competition. The actions spanned from individual struggles for residence rights to supra-regional anti-deportation campaigns; from supporting the political self-organisation of refugees to the practical criticism of the border regimes.

Even though most of the forms of action rarely left the framework of the familiar ones, at least for a brief time the tremendous potential of a movement seemed to shine through in which different starting points, different approaches and contrasting positions were no longer its shortcoming, but rather the basis of a new form of political organisation. Although actions like the "migrating-church asylum" from Cologne, where up to 600 illegal migrants fought for over a year for papers, were by no means as spectacular as the occupation of the churches in Paris, they achieved considerable partial success which in the meantime has led to the legalisation of almost all of the participant refugees and, with all the difficulties, prove that standing up for ones rights is more beneficial than sitting still.

Without the usage of new media and network technologies, a campaign like "No one is illegal" could not have been realized. Immediately after its adoption the call had been disseminated by

this, it's not clear what will emerge from these liberated spaces, or if what emerges will be hardy enough to withstand the mounting attacks from the police and military, as the line between terrorist and activist is deliberately blurred. The question of what comes next preoccupies me, as it does everyone else who has been part of building this international movement. This book simply offers a view into the early life of the movement that exploded in Seattle and has evolved through the events of September 11 and its aftermath: a record of the first chapter in a very old and recurring story, the one about people pushing up against the barriers that try to contain them, opening up windows, breathing deeply, tasting freedom.

NAOMI KLEIN
<http://nologo.org>

websites and mailing-lists in a dimension and at a speed which would have otherwise only been possible with an immense organizational apparatus. The Internet not only promised new and efficient publication strategies, but also opened a realm of communication which revealed immense possibilities for a decentralized campaign without material resources or its own apparatus of organisation. Shortly before the commercial boom in the Net, for the first time and on many different levels, the opportunity arose for a common everyday practice that went beyond the mostly very narrowly defined limits of the local actions: Internet facilitated all at once an exchange of experience as uncomplicated as it was discrete; numerous forms of direct and indirect collaboration in projects which were no longer spatially or temporally limited, as well as continual, self-defined communication without the need for one always having to be in the same place at the same time.

Soon it was no longer questionable that with the Internet experience a European-wide communication network could be founded on a broad ground. Up until then, it had only been possible to maintain international contacts through great personal willingness and effort, extensive travel and letter correspondence; or alternatively the contact just happened through pure coincidence. Systematic networking was seen as a privilege mostly of non-governmental organisations, which were as well equipped as much as they lacked ambition and for whom it was principally a question of the legitimation and perpetuation of their own hierarchies.

It all began with a meeting in Amsterdam, at the margins of a big demonstration against the EU summit in 1997 to which just about forty activists from anti-racist groups, some immigrant self-organisations and refugee support initiatives from middle and northern Europe gathered. The priorities and objectives of the political work in each country were gravely different, but what the groups had in common was the demand for practical, political intervention at the base i.e. grassroots politics. The new network with the title "admission free" was, as they stated, not concerned to adopt a common political program or even to represent a movement, but to systematically create the preconditions for a Europe-wide collaboration, whose purpose was in the first place to enrich the every-day activities in each and every country.

Yet, although a regular exchange of information was arranged amongst the participants of the first network-meeting, the initial zest soon died away. The practical intentions were too abstract, the criteria for the admission of new groups into the network and mailing lists were too rigorous and the communication amongst the participant groups, who had already known each other for years through successful cross-border co-operation outside the Net, was too hermetic. The actual potential of the alliance at first remained hidden behind a formalism, which in spite of growing confidence, still revealed little understanding of the necessities and possibilities of European-wide co-operation. Opportunities such as the journey of the 'Tute bianche' to Valona passed by without a European dimension of resistance leaving the realm of pure rhetoric and without gaining any practicality. However, this was about to change: in 1999 the network was renamed "Noborder" and relaunched with the European-wide protest action to mark the occasion of the EU's special summit "justice and the interior" in

A brief history of the noborder network

Hagen Kopp/Florian Schneider

It wasn't exactly the right place nor really the right time to launch

a political campaign which publicly called for a series of offences

against the law, yet when the call "No one is illegal" went out exactly

five years ago at documentaX, the usual reservations counted

little. In the Orangerie which had been temporarily arranged as a

media laboratory, at the end of the visitors' course of the well-

known Kessler art exhibition, a dozen political and media activists

from all Germany's bigger cities met up at the end of June 1997 in

order to publish an appeal.



which many, especially illegal workers participated - it remains to be seen how serious the intentions are within the German trade union apparatus to truly represent the interests of undocumented workers and those employed under precarious conditions.

In any case, the database project "expert-base.net" that was publicized in a first test version at the make-world-conference is a provocative attempt to counteract the realities of an unofficial working market through a virtual job-mediating machine, one that doesn't ask for papers and where everyone interested can present themselves anonymously with their abilities and skills as they define them. But there is more: over and above the actual employment mediation, the forum offers an excellent possibility to determine the new composition of the migrant working class, above all in the lower wage levels of the new 'affective labour'. As a virtual, militant investigation certain information could be acquired according to various focal points on the subjectivity of the hired house keepers, nurses, janitors and programmers who are currently hired on a large scale and come primarily from Eastern Europe.

The prevailing migration discourse has long since shifted from the whole-sale hermetic isolation of the national labour market to an as efficient as possible filtering out of the exact and only temporarily needed work force. This paradigm change fundamentally changes the special role and function of the borders: as in many other areas, networking technologies are replacing the previously common, truly banal methods of visa endorsement and face checks. Borders are no longer material lines of fortification clearly identifiable by barbed wire or highly developed surveillance instruments. The border regime, often still played down with the well meant metaphor "Fortress Europe", is becoming omnipresent. Under the pressure of increasing mobility and in view of the autonomy of massive immigration, the drawing up of borders is becoming virtual and its repressive character is hardly generalisable any more: it could happen here as well as there, for this reason or another, and with a series of different consequences. Borders fold and shift inwards or outwards, they are advanced into safe third states and expanded into the hinterland. Controls have long since stopped being limited to nation states but cover the inner cities' traffic junctions and supra-regional traffic routes to the

There was a glimpse, a sudden and volatile moment in today's march when I thought we were close to our objective of "marching on the left". We were already in Sandton, and the Convention Centre was in sight. At a certain point I saw the Leaders of the movement quickly jump off the truck from where they had until then directed the operations and disciplined the demonstration. They ran on top of the march and at the same time Anna Weekes made me notice that there was a frantic run in the same direction by a group of young comrades. Shouts of "down with the marshals" were heard. Anna and I had the same thought: "Fuck! They want to break the cops' line".

Ritualism and conventionality

It was just a moment, then order and discipline were restored, but when the march was concluded by the Leaders' final speeches many of us retained the ominous thought that the Leaders' main concern at that point was that some could have funny ideas about breaking the "Red Zone". That can explain why many of their speeches replicated the very emptiness, rhetorical ritualism and mechanical repetitiveness that we have so often denounced as one of the most insidious disempowering devices that the Left has always used vis a vis its own grassroots. The best definition of the demonstration based on its conclusion was provided by an American comrade: "domesticated". The ritualism and conventionality of the Leaders' speeches (together with the banality of the slogans suggested from the bloody truck) is what has ultimately produced the political outcome of the demonstrations in terms that can unequivocally be defined as an appalling failure. And this time not even media coverage rescues us. Of course the political failure contrasted with the success of the march in terms of numerical turnout, which was indeed quite significant. But precisely in this contradiction between numerical

same extent as they do half or non-public spheres - the most prominent of these being the workplace.

The postmodern control society, in which the most internalised border is becomes a reality, tends to individualise power and to anchor itself in the process of subjectivation instead of the previous methods that involved getting rid of less pleasant subjects by means of inclusion and exclusion. 'Border' today is everywhere where people who out of need or desire spend an uncertain time in another country are turned into illegal immigrants; where people who do not have the privilege of a regular wage are not ashamed and are therefore criminalized; where neighbours are turned into informers in the voluntary service of the border patrol; when to stand by others and grant support is no longer the most normal thing in the world, but has been turned into a serious crime.

The new borders are virtual not only because at practically any time one lives with the anticipation of an inspection, but because the physical realm is short-circuited with databases and data-currents from which the corresponding access rights are drawn. In almost all areas of digitalised life information is checked, which in real time is degenerated and regenerated into innumerable data. It's a question of indicators for habits, preferences, and convictions which are as easily evaluated as arbitrarily interpreted. User profiles give information about one thing above all: who or what is useful right now and who or what isn't.

It has long since been essentially about much more than a bare proof of identity. Borders are inverted and privatised, not only because it is less and less the state, but more enterprises and private persons who monitor personnel, passengers, couples and passers-by. What once was a purely private matter is now exposed to the merciless eye of a general public and what was previously publicly accessible is suddenly restrictive without any further ado. The creeping inversion of public and private spheres, territory and hyperspace has progressed to the extent to which communication, instead of private property, has become the determining production factor and people no longer own anything but their information value. Traditional basic rights such as freedom of movement are becoming more and more linked with the question of informational self-determination.

success and political failure lies the biggest problem emphasised by the march. Numbers in demos like this can mean two rather different things. They can indicate a mass, made of distinct individual or group identities whose unity is artificially produced through the mediation of a specialised leadership that is the repository of a general ideological discourse as the lowest common denominator. Or it can indicate a multitude, where the distinctiveness of autonomous singularities is engaged in trying to identify a commonality of themes and aims from below, without this leading to a higher form of political synthesis that obliterates singularities themselves. The political outcome of today's demo goes towards the first of the two directions outlined here. And it is a very problematic outcome inasmuch it reiterates the self-construction and self-representation of the current movement's leadership as a separate political apparatus located in the control of organisational dynamics. This separation of the apparatus was particularly evident when the ANC tried its incredible provocation of sending Essop Pahad (one of the most sinister faces of the Mbeki regime, the former Stalinist chief eliminator of any form of dissent to the ANC during "the struggle") on the stage. I doubt that there was no one who wanted to jump on the stage at that time to kick that asshole down. Whatever the peoples' feelings might have been, however, it was Virginia Setsshed'i's kind invitation to "comrade Pahad" to step down that prevented more dramatic outcomes. And down he stepped, maintaining the affable and deriding smile that he has kept on his face for the whole duration of the appearance. Power always recognises itself, and it was precisely the self-recognition of Power on the two sides of the barricade, and the liturgical mediation thereof, that made such a humiliation of the movement possible.

New social movements

The Noborder camp in Strasbourg in July 2002 was not only the attempt to criticize the border and migration regimes of the countries part of the Schengen convention with a common European-wide action, but also with the political focus on the Schengen information system (SIS) to thematise the restriction on freedom of movement and information. Personal Information of undocumented migrants has been collected for years in huge data banks in order to bring the very people who are robbed of all possible rights under the seriously expanded jurisdiction of state control. Despite of or perhaps because of the numerous visitors, the Noborder-camps may be managed in a very rudimentary fashion to communicate this new dimension of migration control at a European level and to try to turn it into actions. During the ten days in Strasbourg the two to three thousand participants from over twenty countries in Europe were predominantly concerned with themselves and their own differences without managing from the start to shift the focus; i.e. to abandon the levelling out of these differences and to use them rather as a starting point for a new political capacity to act which goes beyond borders and innumerable differences, or on the contrary even thrives on these.

The experiences from Strasbourg were at first sight for many quite shocking: a striking inability to communicate, inwardly or outwardly as well as an incapacity to make democratically legitimate decisions. These abilities are all the more necessary in such situations where communication is taking place in different languages, thought in countless contexts and acted with in the most different of backgrounds. However the Noborder camp could quickly prove itself as an extraordinary case which only too clearly illustrates how a political and practical fixation on the apparatus of state repression can only mislead. And how overdue a movement of movements is which consists of more than the sum of individual gestures. A modern concept of militancy must above all be creative and produce new forms of resistance that proceed from the flexibilisation and deregulation of the conditions of the production of subjectivity and that operate by experimenting and intervening at just this level. In the end nothing and no one can tell what people might make of themselves if one would only let them.

http://noborder.org

I have already mentioned the trite rhetoric in the leaders' speeches. True, that rhetoric has not prevented them to denounce the "Mbeki regime" and the "ANC government", themes that, however, for long have not been taboos at the grassroots. However, the forms in which that denunciation was made sounded terribly empty, and were usually played on Power's discursive field, in terms of Power's own contradictions ("remember why we have voted you", "go back to the Freedom Charter", and so on). In no ways those interventions were able to grasp the quite radical interrogation and critique of power that comes from the movements' own daily practices. These practices are based on forms of community self-management, construction of grassroots discourse, direct action in ways that are so rich, plural and diversified to be totally at odds with the hierarchical organisational practices of the traditional Left from which the Leaders come. And, in fact, it is not by chance that the APF represents de facto only a minority of urban social movements in South Africa today, mainly around Jo'burg (in spite of their boasting fictitious "affiliations" in Durban and Cape Town).

What is completely missed at the leadership level is that the critique of Power that the new social movements in South Africa represent is radically different from what the post-colonial state form has experienced so far, where such a critique has usually been expressed as a rejection of the 'inter-class' or 'non-class' content of national liberation. What is going on here and now is rather a constituent process of grassroots subjectivities that question the very validity of unifying identities (be they called "class", "party", "union") as the form of expression of common desires. This is simply because these forms of representation and delegation, quite effective when the stake of conflict is State Power, simply no longer work when the stake becomes immediate reappropriation of life, which is as radical and subversive as

The march on the left

Franco Barchiesi

We at Indymedia South Africa had announced in a previous com-

ment that today's march on the WSSD would have been also a

"march on the left". With that expression we meant that it was time

for the new social movements to express the qualitatively new "bio-

political" nature of their struggle in terms of refusal not only of the

identity and mystique of "national liberation", but also of the lead-

ership practices of a left that has historically tended to reproduce

subordination and discursive expropriation of the movements'

grassroots subjectivity

the constraints imposed by the market and the commodity form are tight and is, especially, unavailable to mediate, to be channelled, represented, predictable.

No matter of theorising

This is not just a matter of theorising. The current separation of the Leadership and its ghostly ideological discourse from the multifarious processes of subjectivity construction in today's movements in South Africa creates a void in the definition of the movements' discourse. And unless that is filled by interventions aimed at defining a commonality of themes around a prospect of anti-

Is it a Yes Men Satire? Yes, it is Yes Men, but it's not a satire

A virtual interview

Andy , is the Yes Men a Satire?

In their past impersonations of the WTO, The Yes Men chose to make satire in the tradition of Johnathan Swift`s "A Modest Proposal". They pushed free-trade agendas to their logical conclusion, arguing for abolishing the siesta, selling votes to the highest bidder, and even allowing managers to administer electric shocks to sweatshop workers from afar by using a futuristic telepresence technology embedded in a three foot long golden phallus. (for details on this see www.theyesmen.org)

The problem with that approach: there was no reaction. Nobody in the audience was outraged. Audiences didnt think there was anything wrong with the horrible ideas presented by the WTO, even though they were nearly the moral equivalent of Swift's "Modest Proposal". The audience respected the presenters so much, that they simply went along with them. So, having failed at satire this time the Yes Men decided to take the high road and simply be honest. When they were accidentally invited to speak as the WTO at an accounting conference in Australia, they took the opportunity to do what they really wanted to do and thus on Tuesday this week, in front of an audience of accountants and dignitaries that even included the Australian Consul-General of Canada, they announced the end of the WTO, and its replacement with the Trade Regulation Organization. And sincerity worked. The sincere lecture got a sincere response. All the participants agreed that in light of the way that gap between rich and poor has been growing in the world, something had to be changed. The post-presentation luncheon turned into a think-tank for what the new Trade Regulation Organization can offer, and how it can be put in the service of helping people.

Why are you targeting the WTO in your most recent action?

WTO is nice symbol of all that is happening corporations-vs.-democracy-wise.

How has the WTO responded to your site and your episodes? Have they issued any press statements?

Yes, they have. They told Alexandre Piquard of the French magazine called Transfert that they were very nice (the WTO). "Nous sommes gentils" is how they put it. That's all I know. To another journalist (Barnaby Feder of the New York Times) they said they "deplored" it (the Bichlbauer situation-not his toxic pieing and death but the whole situation) but believed in free speech, more or less. So I think here we have contradictory statements, sort of. After all, deploring is not your typical nice sort of emotion to convey. I mean, if I see you on the street and say "I deplore you" and then see you at local bar and say "I am so nice," are you going to believe me? But then, the WTO isn't really just some guy walking around on the street....

Do you have any more hoaxes in the works?

We haven't done any hoaxes! If you mean representing the WTO more honestly than they represent themselves, yes, we do--we have been invited to a conference somewhere in Oceania. In the spring. We look forward to it very much.

What are you expecting from your action?

Dramatic illustration of things. As dramatic as a three-foot penis!

But, I mean, you maybe want to prove that people can easily believe everything they heard if it's presented as serious, isn't it? Or you want to disrupt the official speach of WTO by doing fake presentation?

Well, it is already entirely well-known that people believe what is presented with the voice of authority. It is just not so widely understood that *people in positions of responsibility and power*

capitalist liberation, the void becomes a space where any sort of exclusivist, sectarian, reactionary closed identities flourish. An urgent problem from this point of view is, for example, the proliferation of Islamic fundamentalists at our marches, an issue that was already contentious last year in Durban and became quite visible today as well. While the entrenchment of such reactionary crap is a problem from the point of view of defining a multitude's commonality, it is not a problem for a leadership for which 3.000 islamists, independently from the contents they bring, are still valuable to swell numbers and add to the higher glory of the Leaders. Last year in Durban these

believe what is presented with the voice of authority. And that one huge voice of authority is very clearly the WTO. Others, for example, are corporations. So that these supranational corporate bodies, which are less and less responsible to anyone--to national democracies, for example--are really not checked, are really not watched with anything near the proper amount of attention. That's bad!

A Question about your lecture and performance at the "Fibres and Textiles for the Future" seminar arranged at the Tampere University of Technology (Finland). In your lecture you ended up wearing a golden leotard with a three-foot phallus, explaining the purpose of the "Management Leisure Suit" was to allow managers, no matter where they were, to control their remote workforces in the developing world. Why did you do it?

Basically, it's because the WTO is a really big deal that has a lot to say about what happens and what doesn't. And you take a look at the things they say in the press and on their website and it's so ludicrous, so infantile. They say things like "Letting big companies do whatever the fuck they want anywhere in the world will lead to cleaner air because the companies will have really big profits and therefore so will the countries they are in and then those countries will spend that extra money on buying equipment that's better for air quality." This is really the gist of what Mike Moore has said. Given this sort of idiotic idea, it's really funny to see how much respect this organization gets from truly smart people. And we wonder: just how totally repulsive could it be and still get respect and allegiance from those really smart people? Could it, say, proclaim something like "Voting should be privatized--companies should be able to purchase votes for president"? Could it say "Today's remote labor system is a lot like slavery, but even better"? Could it say "Gandhi was really misguided"? Would people clap? The answer has always been a resounding YES -- and that's why we are The Yes Men. We say YES too! *What was the reaction from delegates?*

After the lecture, Mike and I wandered around the enclave and spoke with people in various environments--at lunch, at dinner, in the lobby, etc. Always people understood what the lecture had been about. Always people said it was not offensive. Under other circumstances they would have found it offensive, but because it was the WTO saying these things, they were ready to goosestep. And they were so friendly! Apple wine and pretzels! Hearty handshakes! Sometimes, great earnestness and desire to continue relations into the future between our camp and yours. Do you have a card? Here is mine. Let us read one another's position papers! I like you!

What was the reaction in the hall?

They gave us more than polite applause. They gave us robust applause. And the president of the conference mentioned the talk at least three times in public--once right after, once during the day, and once during his dinner announcement, right before the traditional Finnish folk music part. Each time, he said how grateful they all were for this very nice presentation by this WTO representative. (In Salzburg they were listening too, though apparently not quite as well. Perhaps they were less smart? Or perhaps the performance was less clear? I have learned to enunciate. SLAVE-RY. GAN-DHI. E-LEC-TRO-CU-TION.) What does this say about corporate man's likelihood to examine and temper the power of the mouthpiece of the (not entirely hypothetical) extremely driven organization, whether it be his own or another's? Ready to goosestep. Fully in sync with the bottom line of the commanding operation. And not just the corporate man: the corporate woman, the academic man, the political woman, the alcoholic

problems were dealt with also in the form of a direct contestation of the Leaders of the Left (the silencing of Sangoco, the dreadful Trotskyite marshals sent with their butts on the ground). It was especially for this reason that many of use have thought of the Durban demo as a "constituent moment" for the movements' subjectivity. Today we have made a step back from that moment, maybe the problem is with big marches, which cannot replace a necessary daily work of, as we have written on our IMC T-shirts, "DISOBEDIENCE, DEFECTION, BETRAYAL".

child. Many, many people, regardless of education, are easy prey for the ideas of the corporate decision-makers. Present them with a decision, they will accept it! This is why it is important for citizens to decide what sorts of corporate decisions are and are not acceptable. It is never possible to count on the highly educated to filter the okay from the rotten. It is not possible to expect that Ph.D.s will always be on the lookout for the fascist and murderous. Fortunately, it is possible to establish laws that regulate the behavior of corporations and the like. That way, it is not necessary to rely on the alertness of Ph.D.s to yell when scary things get said or, in the event, done.

What did the WTO say to that incident?

They have told at least two reporters (from Transfert, and from New York Times) that they "deplore" us. "Deplore"! Well, we deplore them! Those dumb-asses! Also, in Transfert, they suggested we should wear masks of Mike Moore's face and run around yelling angry epithets about him. That would be funny, they said. They are really stupid! Of course, we are also very stupid. Mike and I, we can laugh for hours about these things that we do, just like the WTO laughs when people wear Mike Moore's face. HAHAHAHAHAAAAHAHA! We are really dumb that way. But we think journalists like our funniness better, and that's why they write articles about us. And they also get some serious points in, that they come up with within their own heads.

Who are you targeting with this kind of action? The guys you do the presentation for? Or somebody else?

NOT the guys we're doing the presentation for--and here you have touched on a very important key. Our aims: 1. The first aim was to show how easy it is to transmit and have accepted extremely dangerous, even fascistic ideas, if one has the name of the WTO. 2. The perceptive will notice that these ideas are in fact only logical extensions of the WTO's own immediate ideas--and illustrating that is our second aim. In fact both aims go together: we want to show that we have a situation now in which there is this incredibly powerful and sometimes violent blok--the WTO, the corporations it serves, etc.; we can call it the "money blok" or something--and the only critical eye on this blok is that of what has come to be called the "anti-globalization" movement. No one besides this movement seems to be paying any attention whatsoever, nor has any moral compunctions about what goes on. We have found this to be dramatically the case among lawyers (<http://theyesmen.org/wto/>), industrial Ph.D.s (<http://theyesmen.org/finland/>), and also an unknown audience that watches business TV (<http://theyesmen.org/tv.html>). The responsibility for paying attention is therefore squarely on the shoulder of the "anti-globalization" types--something they already know, of course, but we just aim to illustrate it nice and clearly.

politics. But the most obvious problem with this book is its working motif: its basic thesis that somehow the 'takeover' went un-noticed. Rather the current state of politics, especially in Britain, is exactly characterised by the re-management of the balance of government and business in the face of the displacement of the traditional left. The defeat of labour was not silent, but silenced. Indeed we are still reeling from the gradual destruction of opposition to privatisation of public services. The battles fought out by a dying labour movement are not represented in this book, and the symbolic activisms that have taken their place are not at all understood in the context of such a defeat. That her own political agenda of consumer activism is the result of such a process rather than the basis for a new one is not even considered by Hertz and we are left wondering what is on the cards for the future, when the author of such a palpably ignorant and obsequiously opportunist intervention is described as a leading new thinker of our generation.

Graduates from Hertz and Klein's shopping mall St Trinian's would do well to upgrade their diploma at where post-structuralism and Italian Marxism meet. Empire, written over a period of ten years, is immediately relevant to the world that Klein and Hertz have construed. The differences lie in the depth of the analysis. Whereas Klein skates upon the surface of brand identity, Negri's materialism leads him to present his analysis through the dimensions of the object of study itself. What makes Negri's attempt to restate a historically sensitive realism so fascinating is that this procedure is performed without recourse to a dialectic of negativity. If Klein mirrored her subject matter haphazardly by only dipping into its pre-conditions, Hardt and Negri have successfully provided an ontological view of the new world order that reproduces the hierarchy of its constitution. Empire excels in its clarity of exposition and a treatment of its content hallmarked by consistency and commitment. For this reason, in respect to an emerging politics, Empire is a tool for and a lesson in practice.

From positing the reconstitution of the political on the level of the trans-national, Empire moves on to delineate how traditional conventions of contractarian political philosophy must give way to the perception that the political is thus constituted, not in spite of, yet as a direct result of the activities and the productive, creative, desiring energy of the multitude. Constitutive power at the level of the multitude disturbs conventional concepts of state sovereignty, the ontological weight of the multitude's desires placing the whole edifice of globalised polity in a responsive rather than proactive position. Despite the in-determinacy of the category of the multitude, the prole-

tarianised many, this aged political referent serves as both the conceptual and real counterpart to Empire. The contemporary demands that capital make of labour lie in the intensification and extension of the value form of labour through further simultaneous homogenisation and differentiation of the concrete activity of work. Within Hardt and Negri's analysis this logic assumes a new turn of fate. Crucial here is the use of the Marxian notion of the general intellect, as is the changing reality of working practices. The socio-biological and cultural networks of social production lose their distinctive separation from the field of work. 'Affective labour' inaugurates the complete immersion of productive logic into areas traditionally understood as areas of consumption and dissemination of the surplus. Fundamental to this process is that 'cooperation is completely immanent to the labouring activity itself'. Hardt and Negri see post-fordist production as forcing society to the stage where immaterial labour creates the 'potential for a spontaneous and elementary communism'. Yet not only does labour become closer in form to its systemic social character; the complete subsumption of labour by capital subverts the time of value production to the extent that even when outside of the regime of work, value is still produced. This is the world of the bio-political. It is easy to see how socialist feminist claims concerning the productivity of domestic labour find a place within this encompassing and integrative picture.

It is difficult to judge the truthfulness of this new regime of labour. It is tempting to fall back on Klein and the image of the dark satanic mills to sustain a notion that fundamental to capital is the imposition of one particular form of social control and raw exploitation. For sure this will long remain a reality of global capitalism. But if we formulate our critique of capital at its extremes we run the risk of failing in our critique of the type of everyday life that capital engenders within its heartlands. None of these three books offer much evidence to suggest that the power of private appropriation has waned. Indeed all the evidence points to the contrary. But they offer remarkably different responses. The fact that capitalists are in a position to steer, dominate and control what passes for social life shows the entrenchment of its social power, but we can see here its vulnerability too. The absolute poverty of the conventional apparatus of representative democracies means that any recourse to their authority mocks genuine attempts to enact politics from below.

Capital as a transcendent power

That young people are captured by the spectacular images of societies that know themselves through consumption suggests their powerless-

not dissimilar to your own. On the whole, it is best to play it safe and go straight for the big corporate fuckers. Some people will suggest that shoplifters are a selfish breed, since 'we all pay for it in the end' through inflated prices to cover losses and so forth.

Thou shalt not steal

However, comrades, this and closely analogous arguments are used to justify lowering wages, breaking unions, lowering corporate taxation and taxation on the rich and corporate sector we may as well sell ourselves into bonded slavery now, or join the Liberal Party. No, the injunction against stealing from capitalism is itself a capitalist ideology and should be spurned as such. Although we have been taught that 'thou shalt not steal', an order historically backed by threats of divine retribution, this should not for one minute stop us from taking the redistribution of wealth into our own hands. Believe me, no-one is likely to do it for us.

Shoplifting from big corporations, either as organized collective actions, as the ones unemployed people have often performed, or as equally organized but performed by smaller groups: families, couples or individually, might be an edible way of showing the contradictions of capitalism, a highly enjoyable way of counteracting the global order of sleeping cities and shopping malls. Organized, sustainable shoplifting from big corporations will not only attack their price policy and/or their profits margins, it will force them to a further militarization of their space and space, but above all it will make you discover a set of new political pleasures, including the possibility of generous

ness against the dominant logic. Yet Negri shows how this positing of capital as a transcendent power with all its pseudo-religious symbols can be and is daily subverted by multitudes that do not see the political as separate to the social. A politics based on high-street consumption could never effectively challenge capitalism, so long as the presupposition of market society remains the unchallenged economic and social alienation that is the mainstay of the social production of commodities.

Self-elected or media-sponsored representatives will continue to present the reclamation of public space as the goal of anti-capitalist politics. Rather for us, the issue is the reclamation of our alienated social power. To this end the politics of bio-power, the bottom-up realisation of the potential of people to reap the fruits of their own activity, effectively challenges both the social power of capital as well as the ethical discourse that seeks to limit our desires. Crucially Empire locates the potential for politics not in the world of banal manufactured identities and the defacement of the spectacle but in the realm of our massive creative productive energies. Anti-capitalism need not degenerate into pathetic demands for a face-lift to a system that is itself always pointing to a future beyond it. The invective found in Empire that potential for change lies in the here and now is in places being taken seriously by elements within the anti-capitalist movement. It is a strong foundation block for a maturing movement. Empire ends by opposing the misery of power with 'the irrepressible lightness and joy of being a communist'. Rebellion is cast as a project of love. Herein lies a real potential to redefine a meaningful distinction between us and them. Yet reading Klein and Hertz shows that the lines are not yet in the least fully drawn. This project is one to be realised; until then we had better keep the champagne on ice.

Naomi Klein, No Logo, London: Flamingo, 2001 (pb. £8.99). Noreena Hertz, The Silent Takeover: Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy, London: Random House, 2001 (pb. £12.99). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000 (pb. £12.99).

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Yomango: Sabotaging capital whilst having fun

So far and so long in the anti-globalization movement it should be clear that the whole thing with this global capital is finding it and opposing it everywhere and under every form, all along and all over our lives: since it's everywhere in your life, so that, whatever you do, it becomes fatter and slimmer, reaches farther and stronger.

Obviously, the great question remains "what's to be done?" and the answers can only be as multiple and diverse as the faces of this global capital. This one here is a proposal for the concept of a kind of civil disobedience which, as capital itself, is inserted into everyday life and which, unlike capital definitively, has to be joyous and enjoyable by everybody. We call it SCCPP "sabotaje contra el capital pasándoselo pipa". An SCCPP has to be something you are willing to do, something you can do as often as possible and something you'll enjoy doing. It's got to be a sabotage against capital having fun.

Within capitalism, most of us are either (1) alienated from our labour and hence dependent on the ruling classes for commodities as basic as food and clothing, (2) excluded from the division of labour, in which case we are likewise dependent on the State, or (3) performing unpaid and/or unrecognised labour and hence dependent on patriarchal relations for food, clothing, etcetera. In any case, our access to resources is severely limited by contemporary relations of domination. One partial solution to this problem may be to steal. Sadly, however, many people living precariously on low incomes tend to either: (1) avoid shoplifting for anachronistic moral and/or ethical reasons; or (2) remain ignorant of the better methods and techniques of shoplifting, thus failing to maximise their lifting potential. From the onset, the golden rule of theft should be enunciated: never steal from somebody who could conceivably be a comrade. Be careful, too, about taking stuff from small 'corner store' type shops - you could be ripping off someone in a situation

According

to a long tradition of thought, the realm of political action can be defined fairly precisely by two boundaries. The first relates to labor, to its taciturn and instrumental character, to that automatism that makes of it a repetitive and predictable process. The second relates to pure thought, to the solitary and non-appearing quality of its activity. Political action is unlike labor in that its sphere of intervention is social relations, not natural materials. It modifies the context within which it is inscribed, rather than creates new objects to fill it. Unlike intellectual reflection, action is public, geared to exteriorization, to contingency, to the hustle and bustle of the multitude.

But the customary frontiers separating Intellect, Work, and Action (theory, poesis, and praxis) have given way, and everywhere we see the signs of incursions and crossovers. I will propose first that Work has absorbed the distinctive traits of political action and second that this annexation has been made possible by the intermeshing between modern forms of production and an Intellect that has become public, that has erupted into the world of appearances. Finally, what has provoked the eclipse of Action has been precisely the symbiosis of Work with "general intellect," or "general social knowledge," which, according to Marx, stamps its form on "the process of social life itself.

I will then advance two hypotheses. The first is that the public and worldly character of the nous - or the material potentiality (potenza) of general intellect - has to be our starting point for a redefinition of political praxis and its salient problems: power, government, democracy, violence, and so on, a coalition between Intellect and Action is counterposed to the coalition between Intellect and Work. Second, whereas the symbiosis of knowledge and production produces an extreme, anomalous, but nonetheless flourishing legitimation for a pact of obedience to the State, the intermeshing between general intellect and political Action enables us to glimpse the possibility of a non-State public sphere.

Activity without Work

The dividing line between Work and Action, which was always hazy, has now disappeared altogether. In the opinion of Hannah Arendt, this hybridization is due to the fact that modern political praxis has internalized the model of Work and come to look increasingly like a process of making (with a "product" that is, by turns, history, the State, the party, and so forth). This diagnosis must be inverted and set on its feet. The important thing is not that political action may be conceived as a form of producing, but that the producing has embraced within itself many of the prerogatives of action.

In the post-Fordist era, we have Work taking on many of the attributes of Action: unforeseeability, the ability to begin something new, linguistic "performances," and an ability to range among alternative possibilities. In relation to a Work that is loaded with "action-ist" characteristics, the transition to Action comes to be seen as somehow falling short, or as a superfluous duplication. In its structuring according to a rudimentary logic of means and ends, politics offers a communicative network and a cognitive content that are weaker and poorer than those to be found within the present-day process of production. Action appears as less complex than Work, or as too similar to it, and either way it appears as not very desirable.

Marx distinguishes two principal kinds of intellectual labor. On the one hand, there is the immaterial activity that has as its result "commodities which exist separately from the producer..., e.g. books, paintings and all products of art as distinct from the artistic achievement of the practising artist." On the other hand, he defines those activities in which "the product is not separable from the act of producing" - in other words, activities that find their fulfillment in themselves, without being objectified in a finished work existing outside and beyond them. The second kind of intellectual labor may be exemplified by "performing artists" but also includes more generally various kinds of people whose work involves a virtuosic performance - a wide cross section of human society, ranging from Glenn Gould to the impeccable butler of the classic English novel.

Of the two categories of intellectual labor, for

Marx only the first appears to fit fully with the definition of "productive labor" (defined as work that procures surplus value). Virtuosos, who limit themselves to playing a "musical score" and leave no lasting traces, on the one hand "are of microscopic significance when compared with the mass of capitalist production" and on the other are to be considered as "wage-labour that is not at the same time productive labour." Although it is easy to understand Marx's observations on the quantitative irrelevance of virtuosos, one experiences some perplexity at his observation that they are "non-productive." For Marx, the absence of a finished work that lives on beyond the activity of performance puts modern intellectual virtuosity on a par with actions undertaken in the provision of a personal service: services that are seen as being non-productive, because in order to obtain them one spends income, not capital. The "performing artist" is thus consigned to the limbo of service work.

The activities in which "the product is not separable from the act of producing" have a mercurial and ambiguous status that is not always and not completely grasped by the critique of political economy. Well before becoming swallowed up within capitalist production, virtuosity was what qualified Action, as distinct from (and in fact opposed to) Work. The pianist and the dancer stand precariously balanced on a watershed that divides two antithetical destinies: on the one hand, they may become examples of "wage-labour that is not at the same time productive labour"; on the other, they have a quality that is suggestive of political action. Each of the potential developments inherent in the figure of the performing artist - poesis or praxis, Work or Action - seems to exclude its opposite. From a certain point onward, however, the alternative changes into a complicity: the virtuoso works (in fact she or he is a worker par excellence) precisely because of the fact that her or his activity is closely reminiscent of political praxis.

Within post-Fordist organization of production, activity-without-a-finished-work moves from being a special and problematic case to becoming the prototype of waged labor in general. When labor carries out tasks of overseeing and coordination, its function consists no longer in the carrying out of a single particular objective, but in the modulating (as well as the varying and intensifying) of social cooperation, in other words, that ensemble of relations and systemic connections that as of now are "the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth." This modulation takes place through linguistic services that, far from giving rise to a final product, exhaust themselves in the communicative interaction that their own "performance" brings about.

Post-Fordist activity presupposes and, at the same time, unceasingly re-creates the "public realm" (the space of cooperation, precisely) that Arendt describes as the indispensable prerequisite of both the dancer and the politician. The "presence of others" is both the instrument and the object of labor; therefore, the processes of production always require a certain degree of virtuosity, they involve what are really political actions. Mass intellectuality (a rather clumsy term that I use to indicate a quality of the whole of post-Fordist labor power) is called upon to exercise the art of the possible, to deal with the unforeseen, to profit from opportunities. Now that the slogan of labor that produces surplus value has become, sarcastically, "politics first," politics in the narrow sense of the term becomes discredited or paralyzed.

What other meaning can we give to the capitalist slogan of "total quality" if not the attempt to set to work all those aspects that traditionally it has shut out of work - the ability to communicate and the taste for Action? And how is it possible to encompass within the productive process the entire experience of the single individual, except by committing her or him to a sequence of variations on a theme, performances, improvisations? Such a sequence, in a parody of self-realization, represents the true acme of subjugation. There is none so poor as the one who sees her or his own ability to relate to the "presence of others," or her or his own possession of language, reduced to waged labor.

Public Intellect, the Virtuosos' Score

What is the "score" that post-Fordist workers

have unceasingly had to play from the moment they were called upon to give proof of virtuosity? The answer is something like this: the sui generis "score" of present-day labor is Intellect qua public Intellect, general intellect, global social knowledge, shared linguistic ability. Production demands virtuosity and thus introjects many traits that are peculiar to political action, precisely and solely because Intellect has become the principal productive force, premise, and epicenter of every poesis.

Marx conceives general intellect as "a scientific capacity" objectified within the system of machines, as fixed capital. He reduces the external or public quality of intellect to the technological application of natural sciences to the process of production. The crucial step consists rather in highlighting to the full the way in which general intellect comes to present itself finally as a direct attribute of living labor, as a repertoire of a diffuse intelligentsia, as a "score" that creates a common bond among the members of a multitude. In post-Fordist production, a decisive role is played by conceptual constellations and schemes of thinking that cannot ever be recuperated within fixed capital, given that they are actually inseparable from the interaction of a plurality of living subjects. What is in question here is not the scientific erudition of the particular worker. What comes to the fore - to achieve the status of a public resource - is the faculty of language, the ability to learn, the ability to abstract and correlate, and access to self-reflection.

By general intellect we have to understand, literally, intellect in general. Intellect-in-general is the faculty that makes possible all composition (not to mention all experience). Virtuosoic performance consists in making Intellect resonate precisely as attitude. Its only "score" is, as such, the condition of possibility of all "scores." This virtuosity is nothing unusual, nor does it require some special talent. One need only think of the process whereby someone who speaks draws on the inexhaustible potential of language (the opposite of a defined "work") to create an utterance that is entirely of the moment and unrepeatable. Intellect becomes public when it joins together with Work, but once it is conjoined with Work, its characteristic publicness is inhibited and distorted. Ever anew called upon to act as a force of production, it is ever anew suppressed as public sphere, as possible root of political Action, as different constitutional principle.

General intellect is the foundation of a kind of social cooperation that is broader than the social cooperation based specifically on labor - broader and, at the same time, entirely heterogeneous. Whereas the interconnections of the process of production are based on a technical and hierarchical division of functions, the acting-in-concert implied by general intellect takes as its starting point a common participation in the "life of the mind," a prior sharing of communicative and cognitive attitudes. Rather than eliminating the coercions of capitalist production, the excess cooperation of Intellect figures as capital's most eminent resource. Its heterogeneity has neither voice nor visibility. Rather, because it becomes a technical prerequisite of Work, the acting-in-concert outside of labor that it engenders in its turn becomes subjected to the kinds of criteria and hierarchies that characterize the factory regime.

The principal consequences of this paradoxical situation are twofold. The first relates to the form and nature of political power. The peculiar publicness of Intellect, deprived of any expression of its own by that labor that nonetheless claims it as a productive force, manifests itself indirectly within the realm of the State through the hypertrophic growth of administrative apparatuses. Administration has come to replace the political, parliamentary system at the heart of the State, but it has done this precisely because it represents an authoritarian concretion of general intellect, the point of fusion between knowledge and command, the reverse image of excess cooperation. For decades there have been indications of a growing and determining weight of the bureaucracy within the "body politic," the predominance of decree over law. Now, however, we no longer have the familiar process of rationalization of the State, but rather a Statization of Intellect. If Hobbes and the other great theoreticians of "political unity" saw the principle of legitimation of absolute power in the transfer of the natural right of each single individual to the person of the sovereign, nowadays we might speak of a transfer of

Virtuosity and Revolution The Political Theory of Exodus

Paolo Virno

Nothing appears so enigmatic today as the question of what it

means to act. This issue seems both enigmatic and out of reach--

up in the heavens, one might say. If nobody asks me what political

action is, I seem to know; but if I have to explain it to somebody

who asks, this presumed knowledge evaporates into incoherence.

And yet what notion is more familiar in people's everyday speech

than action? Why has the obvious become clothed in mystery?

Why is it so puzzling?



Intellect, or rather of its immediate and irreducible publicness, to State administration.

The second consequence relates to the effective nature of the post-Fordist regime. Because the public realm opened by Intellect is every time anew reduced to labor cooperation, to a tight-knit web of hierarchical relations, the interdictive function that comes with "presence of others" in all concrete operations of production takes the form of personal dependency: virtuosic activity comes across as universal servile labor. When "the product is not separable from the act of producing," this act calls into question the self of the producer and, above all, the relationship between that self and the self of the one who has ordered it or to whom it is directed. The setting-to-work of what is common of Intellect and Language, although on the one hand renders fictitious the impersonal technical division of labor, on the other hand, given that this commonality is not translated into a "public sphere" (that is, into a political community), leads to a stubborn personalization of subjugation.

Exodus

The key to political action (or rather the only possibility of extracting it from its present state of paralysis) consists in developing the publicness of Intellect outside of Work, and in opposition to it. On the one hand, general intellect can only affirm itself as an autonomous public sphere, thus avoiding the "transfer" of its own potential into the absolute power of Administration, if it cuts the linkage that binds it to the production of commodities and wage labor. On the other hand, the subversion of capitalist relations of production henceforth develops only with the institution of a non-State public sphere, a political community that has as its hinge general intellect. The salient characteristics of the post-Fordist experience postulate as a conflictual response nothing less than a radically new form of democracy.

I use the term Exodus here to define mass defection from the State, the alliance between general intellect and political Action, and a movement toward the public sphere of Intellect. The term is not at all conceived as some defensive existential strategy, quite the contrary: Exodus is a full-fledged model of action, capable of confronting the challenges of modern politics. Today, a realm of common affairs has to be defined from scratch. Any such definition must draw out the opportunities for liberation that are to be found in taking command of this novel interweaving among Work, Action, and Intellect, which up until now we have only suffered.

Exodus is the foundation of a Republic. The very idea of "republic," however, requires a taking leave of State judicature: if Republic, then no longer State. The political action of the Exodus consists in an engaged withdrawal.

The Virtue of Intemperance

"Civil disobedience" is today the sine qua non of political action - but only if it is conceived differently and freed from the terms of the liberal tradition within which it is generally encapsulated. Radical Disobedience must bring into question the State's very faculty of command. According to Hobbes, with the institution of the body politic we put an obligation on ourselves to obey even before we know what that obedience is going to entail - one will find no specific law that says explicitly that one is not to rebel. If the unconditional acceptance of command were not already presupposed, the actual provisions of the law would have no validity. Hobbes maintains that the original bond of obedience derives from natural law, from a common interest in self-preservation and security. He hastens to add, however, that this natural law, or the Superlaw that requires obedience to all the commands of the sovereign, becomes effectively a law only when one emerges from the state of nature, in other words, when the State is already instituted. What we have here is a paradox: the obligation to obedience is both cause and effect of the existence of the State; it is maintained by that of which it is also the foundation; it simultaneously precedes and follows the formation of the "supreme power." Political Action takes as its target the preliminary and content-less obedience that provides the only basis for the subsequent development of the baleful dialectic of acquiescence and "transgression." In contravening a particular decree on the dismantling of the health service, or on the banning of immigration, one goes right back to the hidden presupposition of every imperative prescription and saps the force of that prescription. Radical Disobedience not only violates the laws,

but also challenges the very foundation of their validity.

In the same way as we saw with "natural law," the "law of general intellect" also has a paradoxical structure: whereas on the one hand it seems to provide the basis of the State Administration's powers of command, demanding the respect of any decision that it may happen to take, on the other hand, it appears as a real law only because (and after) Administration already exercises an absolute command.

Radical Disobedience breaks this circle within which public Intellect figures simultaneously as both premise and consequence of the State. It highlights and develops positively the aspects of general intellect that are at odds with the continued existence of waged labor and sets in motion the practical potentiality of Intellect against the decision-making faculty of Administration. Delinked from the production of surplus value, Intellect becomes the matrix of a non-State Republic.

The breeding ground of Disobedience consists of the social conflicts that manifest themselves not only and not so much as protest, but most particularly as defection, not as "voice" but as "exit" (Albert O. Hirschman). Nothing is less passive than flight. The "exit" modifies the conditions within which the conflict takes place, rather than presupposes it as an irremovable horizon; it changes the context within which a problem arises, rather than deals with the problem by choosing one or another of the alternative solutions already on offer. The "exit" can be seen as a free-thinking inventiveness that changes the rules of the game and disorients the enemy.

Defection stands at the opposite pole to the desperate notion of "You have nothing to lose but your chains." It is postulated, rather, on the basis of a latent wealth, on an abundance of possibilities-in short, on the principle of the tertium datur. But how are we to define, in the post-Fordist era, the virtual abundance that favors the escape option at the expense of the resistance option? What I am talking about here is an abundance of knowledges, communication, and acting-in-concert implied by the publicness of general intellect. The act of collective imagination that we call "defection" gives an independent, affirmative, high-profile expression to this abundance, thus stopping its being transferred into the power of State administration.

Radical Disobedience involves, therefore, a complex ensemble of positive actions. It is not a resentful omission, but a committed undertaking. The sovereign command is not carried out, because, above all, we are too busy figuring out how to pose differently the question that it would interdict.

We have to bear in mind the distinction between "intemperance" and "incontinence." Incontinence is a vulgar unruliness, disregard for laws, a giving way to immediate appetite. Intemperance is something very different - it is the opposition of an intellectual understanding to given ethical and political standards. In Intemperance the Exodus has its cardinal virtue. The pre-existing obligation of obedience to the State is not disregarded for reasons of incontinence, but in the name of the systematic interconnection between Intellect and political Action. In the intemperate recourse to Intellect-in-general there is finally outlined a possibility of a non-servile virtuosity.

Multitude, General Intellect, Republic

The decisive political counterposition is what opposes the Multitude to the People. The concept of "people" in Hobbes (but also in a large part of the democratic-socialist tradition) is tightly correlated to the existence of the State and is in fact a reverberation of it. The progressivist notion of "popular sovereignty" has as its bitter counterpoint an identification of the people with the sovereign, or, if you prefer, the popularity of the king. The multitude, on the other hand, shuns political unity, is recalcitrant to obedience, never achieves the status of juridical personage, and is thus unable to make promises, to make pacts, or to acquire and transfer rights. It is anti-State, but, precisely for this reason, it is also antipopular: the citizens, when they rebel against the State, are "the Multitude against the People." For the seventeenth-century apologists for sovereign power, "multitude" was a purely negative defining concept: a regurgitation of the state of nature within civil society, a continuing but somewhat unformed leftover, a metaphor of possible crisis.

Liberal thinking, then, tamed the unrest provoked by the "many" through the dichotomy between public and private: the Multitude is "private" both in the literal sense of the term, being deprived of both face and voice, and in the juridical sense of being extraneous to the sphere of common affairs. In its turn, democratic-socialist theory produced the dichotomy "collective/individual": on the one hand, the collectivity of "producers" (the ultimate incarnation of the People) comes to be identified with the State, be it with Reagan or with Honecker; on the other, the Multitude is confined to the corral of "individual" experience - in other words, condemned to impotence.

We can say that this destiny of marginality has now come to an end. The Multitude, rather than constituting a "natural" ante-fact, presents itself as a historical result, a mature arrival point of the transformations that have taken place within the productive process and the forms of life. The "Many" are erupting onto the scene, and they stand there as absolute protagonists while the crisis of the society of Work is being played out. Post-Fordist social cooperation, in eliminating the frontier between production time and personal time, not to mention the distinction between professional qualities and political aptitudes, creates a new species, which makes the old dichotomies of "public/private" and "collective/individual" sound farcical. Neither "producers" nor "citizens," the modern virtuosos attain at last the rank of Multitude.

What we have here is a lasting and continuing reality, not some noisy intermezzo. Our new Multitude is not a whirlpool of atoms that "still" lacks unity, but a form of political existence that takes as its starting point a One that is radically heterogeneous to the State: public Intellect. The Many do not make alliances, nor do they transfer rights to the sovereign, because they already have a shared "score"; they never converge into a "general will" because they already share a "general intellect." The Multitude obstructs and dismantles the mechanisms of political representation. It expresses itself as an ensemble of "acting minorities," none of which, however, aspires to transform itself into a majority. It develops a power that refuses to become government. Now, it is the case that each of the "many" turns out to be inseparable from the "presence of others," inconceivable outside of the linguistic cooperation or the "acting-in-concert" that this presence implies. Cooperation, however, unlike the individual labor time or the individual right of citizenry, is not a "substance" that is extrapolatable and commutable. It can, of course, be subjected, but it cannot be represented or, for that matter, delegated.

The States of the developed West are today characterized by a political non-representability of the post-Fordist workforce. In fact, they gain strength from it, drawing from it a paradoxical legitimization for their authoritarian restructuring. The tangible and irreversible crisis of representation offers an opportunity for them to eliminate any remaining semblance of "public sphere"; to extend enormously, as observed above, the prerogatives of Administration at the expense of the politico-parliamentary process; and thus to make an everyday reality of the state of emergency. Institutional reforms are set in motion to prepare the requisite rules and procedures for governing a Multitude upon whom it is no longer possible to superimpose the tranquilizing physiognomy of the "People." As interpreted by the post-Keynesian State, the structural weakening of representative democracy comes to be seen as a tendency toward a restriction of democracy tout court. Opposition to this course of events, if conducted in the name of values of representation, is pathetic and pointless - as useful as preaching chastity to sparrows. Democracy today has to be framed in terms of the construction and experimentation of forms of non-representative and extra-parliamentary democracy. All the rest is vacant chitchat.

The democracy of the Multitude takes seriously the diagnosis that Carl Schmitt proposed, somewhat bitterly, in the last years of his life: "The era of the State is now coming to an end... .The State as a model of political unity, the State as titleholder of the most extraordinary of all monopolies, in other words, the monopoly of political decision-making, is about to be dethroned." And the democracy of the Multitude would make one important addition: the monopoly of decision making can only really be taken away from the State if it ceases once and for all to be a monopoly. The public sphere of Intellect, or the Republic

of the "many," excludes not only the continued existence, but also the reconstitution in any form of a unitary "political body." The republican conspiracy, to give lasting duration to the antimonopoly impulse, is embodied in those democratic bodies that, being non-representative, prevent, precisely, any re-proposition of "political unity" - leagues, councils, and Soviets. We are not dealing with ephemeral appearances whose insurgence leaves undisturbed the rights of sovereignty. The organs of non-representative democracy give political expression to the "acting-in-concert" that, having as its network general intellect, already always enjoys a publicness that is completely different from what is concentrated in the person of the sovereign.

The Soviets of the Multitude interfere conflictually with the State's administrative apparatuses, with a view to eating away at its prerogatives and absorbing its functions. They translate into republican praxis, into a care for common affairs, those same basic resources--knowledge, communication, a relationship with the "presence of others" - that are the order of the day in post-Fordist production. They emancipate virtuosic cooperation from its present connection with waged labor, showing with positive actions how the one goes beyond the other.

To representation and delegation, the Soviets counterpose an operative style that is far more complex, centered on Example and political reproducibility. What is exemplary is a practical initiative that, exhibiting in a particular instance the possible alliance between general intellect and Republic, has the authoritativeness of the prototype, but not the normativity of command. Whether it is a question of the distribution of wealth or the organization of schools, the functioning of the media or the workings of the inner city, the Soviets elaborate actions that are paradigmatic and capable of blossoming into new combinations of knowledge, ethical propensities, technologies, and desires. The Example is not the empirical application of a universal concept, but it has the singularity and the qualitative completeness that, normally, when we speak of the "life of the mind," we attribute to an idea. The Example may be politically reproduced, but never transposed into an omnivorous "general program."

The Right to Resistance

The atrophy of political Action has had as its corollary the conviction that there is no longer an "enemy," but only incoherent interlocutors, caught up in a web of equivocation, and not yet arrived at clarification. The theory of the Exodus restores all the fullness of the concept of "enmity," while at the same time highlighting the particular traits that it assumes once "the epoch of the State comes to an end." The question is, how is the friend-enemy relationship expressed for the post-Fordist Multitude, which, while on the one hand tending to dismantle the supreme power, on the other is not at all inclined to become State in its turn?

In the first place, we should recognize a change in the geometry of hostility. The "enemy" no longer appears as a parallel reflection or mirror image, matching point by point the trenches and fortifications that are occupied by the "friends"; rather, it appears as a segment that intersects several times with a sinusoidal line of flight - and this is principally for the reason that the "friends" are evacuating predictable positions, giving rise to a sequence of constructive defections. The very fact that hostility becomes asymmetrical makes it necessary to give a certain autonomy to the notion of "friendship." The characteristic of the "friend" is not merely that of sharing the same "enemy"; it is defined by the relations of solidarity that are established in the course of flight - by the necessity of working together to invent opportunities, and by the fact of their common participation in the Republic.

Second, one has to be careful in defining today the degree or gradation of hostility. The model of "absolute" enmity is thus seen to be deficient - not so much because it is extremist or bloody, but, paradoxically, because it is not radical enough. The republican Multitude actually aims to destroy what is the much-desired prize of the victor in this model. On the one hand, the battle for "the most extraordinary of all monopolies" is premised on either total victory or total defeat; on the other, the more radical scenario (which is anti-monopolistic) alternates between negotiation and total rejection, between an intransigence that excludes all mediation and the compromises

necessary for carving out free zones and neutral environments.

It is neither "relative" in the sense of the *ius publicum Europaeanum* that at one time moderated the contests between sovereign States, nor is it "absolute" in the manner of civil wars; if anything, the enmity of the Multitude may be defined as unlimitedly reactive. The new geometry and the new gradation of hostility, far from counseling against the use of arms, demands a precise and punctilious redefinition of the role to be fulfilled by violence in political Action. Because the Exodus is a committed withdrawal, the recourse to force is no longer gauged in terms of the conquest of State power, but in relation to the safeguarding of the forms of life and communitarian relations experienced en route. What deserve to be defended at all costs are the works of "friendship." Violence is not geared to visions of some hypothetical tomorrow, but functions to ensure respect and a continued existence for things that were mapped out yesterday. It does not innovate, but acts to prolong things that are already there: the autonomous expressions of the "acting-in-concert" that arise out of general intellect, organisms of non-representative democracy, forms of mutual protection and assistance (welfare, in short) that have emerged outside of and against the realm of State Administration. In other words, what we have here is a violence that is consensual.

We might choose to label the extreme conflicts of the post-Fordist metropolis with a premodern political category: the *ius resistentiae* - the Right to Resistance. The Right of Resistance authorizes the use of violence each time that an artisanal corporation, or the community as a whole, or even individual citizens, see certain of their positive prerogatives altered by the central power, prerogatives that have been acquired *de facto* or that have developed by tradition. The salient point is therefore that it involves the preservation of a transformation that has already happened, a sanctioning of an already existing and commonplace way of being. Given that it is a close relation of radical Disobedience and of the virtue of Intemperance, the *ius resistentiae* has the feel of a very up-to-date concept in terms of "legality" and "illegality." The founding of the Republic eschews the prospect of civil war, but postulates an unlimited Right of Resistance.

Waiting for the Unexpected

The decline of political Action arises from the qualitative changes that have taken place both in the sphere of Work and in the sphere of Intellect, given that a strict intimacy has been established between them. One has to conclude that post-Fordist production has absorbed within itself the typical modalities of Action and, precisely by so doing, has decreed its eclipse. Naturally, this metamorphosis has nothing liberatory about it: within the realm of waged labor, the virtuosic relationship with the "presence of others" translates into personal dependence; the "activity-without-finished-work," which nonetheless is strongly reminiscent from close up of political praxis, is reduced to an extremely modern servitude.

I proposed that political Action finds its redemption at the point where it creates a coalition with public Intellect (in other words, at the point where this Intellect is unchained from waged labor and, rather, builds its critique with the tact of a corrosive acid). Action consists, in the final analysis, in the articulation of general intellect as a non-State public sphere, as the realm of common affairs, as Republic. The Exodus, in the course of which the new alliance between Intellect and Action is forged, has a number of fixed stars in its own heaven: radical Disobedience, Intemperance, Multitude, Soviet, Example, Right of Resistance. These categories allude to a political theory of the future, outlining a solution that is radically anti-Hobbesian.

Political Action, in Arendt's opinion, is a new beginning that interrupts and contradicts automatic processes that have become consolidated into fact. Action has, thus, something of the miracle, given that it shares the miracle's quality of being surprising and unexpected. The point is not to deny the importance of the state of exception in the name of a critique of sovereignty, but rather to understand what form it might assume once political Action passes into the hands of the Many. Insurrections, desertions, invention of new organisms of democracy, applications of the principle of the *tertium datur*: herein lie the Miracles

of the Multitude, and these miracles do not cease when the sovereign forbids them.

The miraculous exception is not an ineffable "event," with no roots, and entirely imponderable. Because it is contained within the magnetic field defined by the mutually changing interrelations of Action, Work, and Intellect, the Miracle is rather something that is awaited but unexpected. As happens in every oxymoron, the two terms are in mutual tension, but inseparable. If what was in question was only the salvation offered by an "unexpected," or only a long-term "waiting," then we could be dealing, respectively, with the most insignificant notion of causality or the most banal calculation of the relationship between means and ends. Rather, it is an exception that is especially surprising to the one who was awaiting it. It is an anomaly so potent that it completely disorients our conceptual compass, which, however, had precisely signaled the place of its insurgence. Finally, it is precisely the explicit reference to an unexpected waiting, or the exhibition of a necessary incompleteness, that constitutes the point of honor of every political theory that disdains the benevolence of the sovereign.

Translated by Ed Emory. Source: Radical Thought in Italy. Ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996.

formed by activity and example.

In this sense, and many other cases, the multitude is ahead of the left. Why? Because it knows power but keeps it secret, hidden, it does not allow its power to be expressed in the form of an institution, whereas for the Left the institution; the accountable, representative and media sensitive body is the only conceivable form of power. Because of this models of organisation are uncritically borrowed from existing pseudo democratic structures (institutional and behavioural) and democracy continues to be seen as a technical and procedural issue of decision-making and consensus formation. This often invokes the ideas of inclusion, community building, and citizenship, whereas the practical manufacture of consent is in reality the opposite; modes of pro-

Will it still be said, then, ("earthquake, "shame", etc) that this is a numbing event? Unforeseen, yes. But not outlandish. Le Pen has been a major elections professional for twenty years. And the fact is he did not get many more votes than usual. Those ravaged by astonishment, by fears and tears, ought to consider this: parliamentarism is a way of conceiving politics in which 25% of all people can vote for Le Pen, just as they can for anyone else. Le Pen is certainly uniform to the others on any number of points, and not visibly eccentric. Le Pen is an important man in French parliamentarism, this is the truth. The only news is that he's made it into the runoff vote of a presidential election. It's about why this has happened, and this alone, that the causes have to be examined. First of all, the parties. The RPR (Rassemblement pour la republique), the PS (Parti socialiste), the 'gauche plurielle' ('plural left' coalition government, consisting of Greens, Socialists and Communists). Chirac and Jospin. Should they be absolved? Should we forget? Should we be rallying behind their panache as if it were suddenly whitewashed by the success of the old Vichyite, the old racist, the old anti-Semite, Le Pen? As for us, faced with the downfall of minds, the suffocating effects of fears, communalism and cowardice, we know that in politics there's only firm resolve on the principles...

What do we call a 'political principle'? To hold to a few maxims, until the end and without letting up, on points considered fundamental about the situation people are being subjected to. We hold that these maxims have to be made into the rule of organized thought and action. That battle be waged with respect to what they defend, in the sense of a collective process determined to change the situation. After all it must be said that we see no sign whatsoever of any kind of firm resolve on principles amongst any of the members of the 'plural left', let alone the RPR.

What we've seen over the past 35 years is the absence of principles, which has set the stage for the downfall of minds. Le Pen is only harvesting, within the official framework of elections and parliamentarism, what has invariably been sown by successive governments.

A few specific examples.

1. Under Mitterand, Mauroy (Prime Minister: 1981-1984) and Fabius (PM: 1984-1986), with the complicity of the PCF (Communist Party), any political reference to the word 'ouvrier' (worker) has been doggedly destroyed. The word 'immigrant' has been used explicitly to take its place. Le Pen's been said to 'address the right problems'. Any working-class utterance, any consideration of factories, has been rejected. The 'modern' bourgeoisie's opinion has been the alpha and omega of all political discourses put together. Beregovoy (PM: 1992-1993) did more to liberalize the financial system than did any of his rightwing predecessors. Jospin has privatized more companies than Juppe (PM: 1995-1997). All have torn the public sector asunder. All have 'modernized' relentlessly. None have cared the least for people's lives, even less for what they could be thinking about it all. It's foolish to be whining about the return of the 'populist' stick. When did you care, dear downcast rulers, about people and their backbone: the worker? To this bourgeois indifference, to the cult of finances camouflaged as 'modernization', let's oppose this principle: no modern progressive politics without a redrawn and rewritten reference to the figure of the worker. It's for having liquidated this

grammatic exclusion and formal engineering of sentiment that organise to placate the vocal minorities at the great expense of those whose desires show no inclination towards formalised political representation. What representation does is force a wedge between subjects and those acting to exploit them. It shifts the terrain onto negotiation, agreement and consensus. The constituent power of the real minority - those thieves and bullies - tries to repudiate or recuperate the 'many' in order to give legitimacy to the structures of meiosis, mediation and control. Power (authority) craves these mediations and very often we give it to them on a plate. And yet the skill of the multitude in withdrawing from these constructions intensifies and accelerates this process where all politics becomes a farcical attempt at capturing a power that is one step

principle, ever since May 1968, that the PCF has vanished. We've got to buckle down to the practical reinvention of the worker figure.

2. In France, there are hundreds of thousands of people of foreign origins--working and living here--most of whom are working-class. Under Mitterand, Mauroy, Fabius, Rocard (PM: 1988-1991), Beregovoy, Balladur (PM: 1993-1995), Chirac, Juppe, Jospin, with the agreement of the entire 'plural left', the question of having the State regularize workers has been made into a question of 'security' and the police. They've been referred to as 'stowaways'. Detention camps have been created. The right of asylum has been wiped out. Regrouping of family-members has been severely limited. The 'Chevenement law' was passed. In exchange for having a simple piece of paper allowing you to come and go freely, it demands official 'proof', which can't be given obviously, of ten years (ten years!) of continual presence on French territory! Following which you complain about the Front National's success? Let's start by not imposing its policies, then! To all of this, principles must be opposed which, for five years, have been those of the Assembly of 'sans papiers' worker collectives (those can't live or work legally in France) residing in the foyers, and of the Organisation politique*: Whomever lives and works here belongs here. Worker foyers are fine. But: unconditional regularization of all 'sans papiers' workers.

3. What made Juppe fall in 1997? Who brought Jospin to power? It was the major December 1995 strike and workers' movement; with the latter: the energetic action of 'sans papiers' workers at the Saint Bernard Church sit-in, combined with intellectuals intervening (alas, all too briefly) against the Pasqua laws. Yet the movements' opening out to parliament is still fallacious. Jospin has no principles. He did not regularize the 'sans papiers'. Nor did he bear in mind the vague and powerful watchword--"together"-- that had thrown millions of people onto the streets in 1995. Did he protect the public sector? Did he reform the schooling system? Did he give the city back to the mass of those who try to live there by re-industrializing and re-urbanizing the so-called 'suburbs'? Not in the least. All he did was pass a law on the 35-hour work week, very useful indeed for the leisure time of white-collar employees, but a law that subjects workers to the "flexible" goodwill of bosses, disorganizes their lives and, by and large, lowers their real salary. And he struck up the 'security' serenade, as did all the official candidates. To that, we've got to oppose the following principles: the city's for everyone. One child = one student. Readable and stable work hours. One must be able to earn a salary with dignity.

4. Every successive government since Mitterand has invariably supported the Americans in their increasingly violent, imperial and cruel ventures. The war against Iraq, the war against Serbia, the war against Afghanistan... We ask: what about the basic principle of national independence and international justice? We're thrilled to see such fiercely devoted defenders of liberties abounding against the old Vichyite. But we'd like them to extend their concern to just a slightly vaster horizon. It isn't coherent to raise the standard of a revolt of souls against Le Pen while the same soul sees nothing wrong in approving someone like Bush (as reactionary, on all fronts, as the Front National) and his war, or Sharon (as brutal in his colonial wars as was parachutist Le Pen in his own, in Algeria). Are we to understand that deliberate

ahead and beyond its grasp. It is to the dark side of the multitude we must turn when reflecting on what can be done, because it is there that forms of subversion are expressed not merely as a refusal, but also as a constitution, that is to say active generation of new forms of life and collectivities. There is nothing inevitable about this process. But when we fashion political strategies from outside or above this power we do so at our peril.

ARIANNA BOVE/ERIK EMPSON

Note: This is the text of a presentation at the dark markets conference, October 3 and 4, 2002 in Vienna.

and delicious liberties are good at home (save for the 'sans papiers' workers, naturally), but that elsewhere the militarist galley is the rule? Against all of that, let's proclaim these principles: complete independence with respect to American ventures. Dissolution of NATO. Attentive sympathy to the current political process in Chiapas. A land and a State for the Palestinians.

There's no mystery. Without respecting these basic principles, without major political battles organized in complete independence according to these principles, political life gets sinister and the downfall continues. Abjection is never far away. It's only a little more probable today. And its ties to the electoral system and parliamentarism are increasingly evident. We believe that no principle of real democratic politics can be consistently implemented by any party or parliamentary group. These democratic principles regulate our own action, in complete independence. This is politics without parties. It's what we call policies made from the people, and not from positions of power. Giving strength to such politics in the troubled times now opening up--that Chirac and Jospin have opened-- is certainly the only durable and efficient means for committing oneself against the worst. Sobbing, 'I'm ashamed', 'Le Pen, you're done for,' and the republican quaver are completely useless. Giving a life, a life of thought, of action, of organization, to politics of an entirely different kind is the great affair.

Possible? No problem. Immediately.

Translated for CounterPunch by Norman Madarasz.

What is to be Thought? What is to be Done?

Alain Badiou, Natasha Michel, Sylvain Lazarus

What happened above all was Jospin's electoral defeat and

Chirac's very weak performance. That's the point to leave off from,

because Le Pen's score is only its consequence.

Homo Politicus Pim Fortuyn: A Case study

Herman Asselberghs

Dieter Lesage

The only thing missing was Elton John. Aside from that, Pim Fortuyn's

departure had all the ingredients of a modest remake of

Princess Di's funeral. It turned into a massive public display of the

Dutch nation's disenchantment and grief. A huge gathering of the

national family turned the city of Rotterdam – the assassinated

politician's home ground – upside down.

Thousands

of fathers, mothers, children, youths and pensioners erected makeshift roadside memorials out of farewell notes, bouquets and cuddly toys, providing the sort of TV material that had already proved its impact several years ago – the main difference now, of course, being the deceased in question. Fortuyn was not the innocent child bride who had publicly blossomed into an independent yet vulnerable woman. He was not the people's princess who had single-handedly and at great personal expense guided the long-isolated British royal family into the modern world. Ever since his appearance on the Dutch political scene, Fortuyn had been a staunch and rowdy iconoclast, a new kind of politician who made paradox his trademark: an elitist populist, a libertine puritan, a modern traditionalist.

Unlike Princess Di, Fortuyn had already undergone his transformation by the time the mass media focused their attention on him. It was as if though his shift from the extreme left to the new right over the past few decades had never taken place, as if he had never advocated anything other than the self-professed common sense which he came to embody during those few first – and last – months of his political career. This public figure, who having dominated the local elections on March 15, 2002, now seemed bound towards a national victory on May 15, seemed made for the spotlight. Today the making of a political personality must be taken quite literally: there can be no political stars without extensive media training and expert hair stylists. But Fortuyn, by contrast, was a natural (and bald to boot, to the regret of many a hairdresser but much to his own benefit, effectively defusing any tricky questions that could have possibly endangered his ambitions for premiership from the start). His eloquent one-liners seemed to be the actual product of his own wit, not prompted by overpaid spin doctors. This was partly due, no doubt, to his years of experience addressing crowded auditoriums in various university departments and his past work as a newspaper columnist. Yet his sharp tongue and flamboyant camera appearances were an unmistakable part of his nature, or "proclivity," as it was once known. Fortuyn was the extroverted kind of homosexual. He may not have been ordinary, but he was perfectly normal.

"At Your Service"

How else to interpret this campaign slogan of Fortuyn's than as a naughty double entendre, a mischievous allusion to the sexual activities our politician admitted he readily succumbed to in the darkrooms of many a gay club? "At your service" means being at someone's disposal, being available. To those in the know, it was a clear sign that this newcomer to the political arena had learned the rules of taking and being taken in quite a different sphere than the public one. His accompanying military salute could be taken as a symbol of determination, but it also suggested – at least as performed by him – a parody of the rituals of the ceremonious "purple" Dutch ruling coalition and of politics in general. Both before and after Fortuyn's death, more than one commentator pointed out that his rudimentary political program functioned mainly as a classic bombshell that shook up the status quo. The same can be said of his image, that of the impeccable but cosmopolitan outsider, the extravagant gay man who poked fun at the stuck-up straight establishment. Queer though he was, his ideas were square. His tough stance and simplistic solutions ensured that his mainly heterosexual constituents gladly forgave him his homosexual coquetry. His straight followers tended to overlook the fact that "their Pim" was gay. They didn't care: he gave voice to what they felt.

That an openly gay politician should be so successful among the gay community, on the other hand, is hardly surprising. As long as equal opportunity for lesbians goes unrealized, there remains a need for positive role models in the public sphere. For many, to have the first openly gay premier in a modern democracy would be effective proof of true social tolerance. Because in our Belgian federal organization a "prime minister" is different than the Dutch "premier," such tolerance has already been demonstrated in our case by the success of socialist Elio di Rupo, who served as prime minister for the Walloon Region. The staunch leader of the French-speaking Socialist Party, Di Rupo is a kind of leftist-populist – but equally dandyish, ultrapopular and gay – Belgian counterpart of Fortuyn, and as the mayor of

his hometown of Mons, he can count on overwhelming loyalty among voters.

That Fortuyn's bid for this highest of representative functions should have been applauded by the gay community mainly serves to illustrate the ghastly limitations of an apolitical sexual politics. Since the 1990s, it appears that for many gay people today, the ultimate social acceptance of one's own homosexual identity is mostly a matter of buying into the consumer market's appropriate niche. For this eager commercial market, gayness means being able to shop like any other affluent citizen. Brand awareness is more highly favored than political awareness. To invest in Dolce & Gabbana, Dior's Higher, Kylie's newest and Brad Pitt's latest is to support the good cause: that is, the introduction of hip queerness into everyday life. For what could be more normal than to consume? It seems that a clever gay person who knows how to enrich boring politics with the hedonism of this entertainment culture can automatically count on gay voters – Fortuyn's crass statements regarding ethnic minorities notwithstanding. Or perhaps he even struck a certain chord with that same gay audience there: after all, who harasses the boys in the street and steals their brand-new Nokia cell phones?

Explicit Politics

During the elections, Fortuyn was doubtless successful among politically unaware (or disinterested?) gays. The real miracle is how, in a country where scandals concerning pedophilia usually cause a public outcry, a considerable number of heterosexual citizens – morally outraged heterosexual citizens, even – voted for this self-confessed pederast. In interviews Fortuyn never made a secret of his love for young boys nor his fondness for rimming. It must be said that most Dutch journalists wouldn't dream of asking an obviously heterosexual politician about his or her sexual habits, but Fortuyn visibly enjoyed such confessions. He understood like no other media celebrity that giving explicit details on his sexual activities would allow him to make his far bolder, blatantly racist and nonsexually intolerant statements unhindered. Fortuyn was the first politician to voluntarily depart from the asexual sexual politics that still dominates the media. For no matter how big a part of the media and the public domain sex may be, every public figure who actually gets associated with it risks humiliation and demonization. If politicians have learned one thing >from the Monica Lewinsky affair, it is that in their particular field of work, sex appeal had better not lead to real sex.

Some gay media celebrities excel at desexualizing their own sexual identities. These openly gay pop stars, game show hosts and soap actors often seem to lead private lives devoid of sex. They are proudly normal, just like any straight celeb. In other words, no promiscuity, no limp handshakes, no nervous tittering, no boas or tutus. To each his or her own style, but it is often these esteemed gay folks who frown upon the participation of flamboyant leathermen and drag queens in the annual Gay Pride parades. These moralists seem to have redeemed their social stigmatization by means of a thorough makeover, and as if that were not enough to ensure their full media cooptation, they now advocate a general purge among their peers. Fortuyn never subscribed to this call for decency. He knew that in these times of full media exposure sexual scandals threaten the life of every politician, especially if they are gay. So he embraced such scandals from the start, to prevent other opportunists >from doing it first. He wasn't going to get caught with his pants down, as George Michael did: his sexual identity would not be a sexless one. After all, he was the guy who "puts his money where his mouth is" – the first politician to take kissing ass in a purely literal sense.

Modern Traditionalism

How to reconcile political dignity with an explicit sex life, let alone an explicitly gay sex life? How to combine social respectability with anonymous, fleeting darkroom sex? Fortuyn's premature death leaves such modern questions regarding contemporary politics unanswered. His indecencies no doubt contributed to his amazingly swift rise as an agent provocateur. The long-term effects of his unusual image still remain to be seen. Other candidates with similar sexual preferences will no doubt step forward, for perhaps those sexual activities which may at first seem aberrant to the average heterosexual voter may well lead to

lasting appreciation in the long run. After all, Fortuyn was not merely a politician of daring tastes, he was also a neoconservative of distinct preferences – and pleasure, desire, and diversity just happen to be distinguishing features of the free market hailed by neoconservatives. In the eyes of many an uneasy and concerned voter, the unabashed homosexual may well look like a tower of strength. Someone who dares to make an autonomous decision about his or her sexual identity – especially one so clearly unconventional – and manages to stay in control over the private sphere that is the body surely must stand out like a rock in a society that is subject to such rapid and radical change it practically seems adrift. Moreover, sexual tolerance and the acceptance of new forms of sexuality are hallmarks of modernity. The social visibility of homosexuals (as in the emergence of lively gay areas in the cities of Shanghai, Tokyo and Paris, for example), in particular, is perceived as a measure of the more pleasant aspects of globalization.

Fortuyn never failed to exploit the modernity of his sexual status. He never tired of stressing the contrast between the wonderfully permissive Netherlands and those "backward" nations where (homo-) sexuality remains taboo. He loved to provoke conservative Muslims, because each time they responded with some diatribe about unnatural behavior and Western decadence, his supposed progressiveness only gained. This is an old racist technique, a tired cliché which gay couples in affordable (and hence ethnically mixed) metropolitan areas are certainly all too familiar with. When someone pees in their mailbox or scratches their car, their longtime Moroccan neighbor will point the finger at some newly arrived Congolese refugee. The former victims of stigmatization are adept at stigmatization themselves. Victims are great at victimizing. Fortuyn was no exception to this sad rule, openly blaming immigrants for rising crime rates and seeking to revoke the Schengen Treaty at once, close the national borders, and introduce racial quotas for all towns, neighborhoods, and schools. Ironically, his simplistic proposal that the Netherlands put itself in order first before concerning itself with the outside world seemed like a secular variant of the Taliban regime's attitude in Afghanistan. With his possibly even more insane resolution to ban computers from all Dutch schools, he displayed a great affinity with those ultraorthodox Jews in Israel who warn against the Internet because it would leave the door to the outside world wide open.

If Fortuyn would have nothing to do with restrictions on sexual conventions, he was fervently eager to narrow the Dutch national identity. Gays could do whatever they please, but foreigners must adapt to Dutch customs. "It's about time we strike back, in a very restrained yet effective and forceful manner, and plainly point out the joint responsibility that the Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillian communities have in containing the misbehavior of some of their numbers. We need to build a people and a nation in order to survive, so they must either adapt and become true Dutchmen, or they must go back to where they came from." This is how the populist from Rotterdam summed up his alien assimilation program. The first Dutch politician who managed to put nationalism at the top of the public agenda got all worked up when "with each Turkish soccer victory, my hometown suddenly turns into Little Istanbul, as if we're under temporary foreign occupation." Chances are that a large number of his conservative heterosexual followers felt exactly the same way about Rotterdam's annual Gay Pride parade – until an assimilated gay man in a tailor-made suit managed to convey to them in plain terms that "in our part of the world, which is that of modernity," the odd homosexual favored the normalization of our complex existence.

The Pigmentation of Nationalism

After falling out with the "Leefbaar Nederland" ("Livable Netherlands") party of which he had been the leader, Pim Fortuyn suddenly had to assemble his own group of candidates to form his "Pim Fortuyn List" for the upcoming general elections. Joao Varela, a handsome 27-year-old communications manager for a cosmetics company who is of Cape Verdean origin, came in second. Varela is what you might call the "white boy" in the Pim Fortuyn saga. Not so much because the genealogy of many Cape Verdeans is characterized by frequent intermingling between black slaves and white colonists, but because in the

Fortuyn saga Varela played the part of the "alien achiever": as a successful businessman, he was almost like a real Dutchman. Moreover, as the story goes, he voluntarily offered his services to the esteemed Mr. Fortuyn at the very same time when Fortuyn was being "stigmatized" as a racist: Varela was the perfect political butler. By joining Fortuyn's list, Joao Varela wanted to help fight the bias against Fortuyn as a racist – something we might call the strategy of the pigmentation of nationalism. Talk about profitable partnership!

Even Pim Fortuyn's alleged killer unwittingly contributed to the politician's destigmatization as a racist. An hour after the assassination in a parking lot in Hilversum's "Mediapark" – bastion of the Dutch mass media – the local police spokeswoman offered some "good" news. The murder suspect had been apprehended, and what's more, he was a white Dutchman, a fact that was greatly emphasized. Sighs of relief were heard everywhere, not least from immigrant organizations. It was the same sort of relief as that which met the announcement that the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had been killed by a radical Jew, not a Palestinian. For a moment, people were afraid Fortuyn had been killed by an immigrant – perhaps a hint that they were well aware of Fortuyn's racist remarks after all, or perhaps itself the result of some primitive racist reflex: It must have been a foreigner. Either way, Fortuyn's racism had not led to his murder. If Fortuyn had been killed by a Dutchman instead of an immigrant, the general understatement went, then perhaps his so-called racism hadn't been so bad after all. Hence, in every interview they gave after his murder, Fortuyn's family always made sure to emphasize that Pim had been a symbol for all Dutch people, black and white.

But the raw political reality soon turned out differently. After Fortuyn's murder, the inevitable questions about his political heritage arose. Who would take his place as party chair? And, even more poignant, who would replace him as the would-be new premier? Some in the Dutch media suggested with a certain malicious glee that Joao Varela, the second candidate, could become the first black European premier. The irony was clear to all, but the suggestion itself was presented in a deadly serious fashion. After Pim Fortuyn's assassination, it was all hands on deck for the Dutch political establishment, and the mainstream media, having been infinitely complicit in the political turmoil caused by Fortuyn, were now more than willing to offer their subtle contribution to containing that very same turmoil. The dry suggestion that a black premier might now come to power was no doubt meant as a subtle threat: Now that Fortuyn is dead, you'd better not vote for his party, lest there be contrary effects. A black premier, imagine! Needless to say, Fortuyn's own party never seriously considered appointing Varela as its new chairman. As for the first woman on their list, who was briefly considered to be a serious candidate to succeed Fortuyn, she was soon found to be too hysterical; the night of the elections, she suddenly blew her fuses and disappeared from view. The alien achiever at number two, the clever blonde at number four: they proved their worth, but things soon returned to

white-male-chauvinist-pig business as usual. Well, what else did you expect? Those who voted for the Pim Fortuyn List were the last to worry about all of this, having understood from the beginning that Pim was just playing it smart – that an immigrant and a woman could (only) serve the cause.

Criminalizing Immigration

Elsewhere in Europe, too, we see how nationalist parties welcome immigrants who wish to join them, not because they have strayed from their original political programs, but as a strategy aimed at the radicalization of those programs instead. After all, having immigrants on board protects them from accusations of racism, just as female members serve to protect them from accusations of sexism. Once it has been "proved" that they are not racist, the nationalists are free to pursue the radicalization of their nationalism. Fortuyn was by no means being original when he said that immigrants already in the country were free to stay but no newcomers should be allowed. In fact this has become the new doxa, or position, of so-called liberal democracy in the West. The only possible argument concerns how far the door must be shut: somewhat, mostly, or completely. Every European country has repressive immigration policies; Fortuyn simply wanted to add a little more repression. Even he never fully closed the door, even if to us Belgians his statements on its desired degree of openness seemed to have more to do with the latest Dutch Belgian joke than with any clear political statement: only refugees from the neighboring countries of Denmark, Germany and the UK were to be allowed (not >from Belgium, it should be noted). In short, Fortuyn's discourse was not heterodox but (allow us our own little joke) homodox: that is to say, in keeping with the doxa. Fortuyn loved the same principles as the ruling Dutch statesmen, only he loved them to the bitter end.

Stefan Heym once asked about East German Communism, "What kind of system is it whose only validity rests on the forceful inclusion of its own people?" The same question must now be reversed with regard to capitalism: "What kind of system is it whose only validity rests on the forceful exclusion of other people?" The Berlin Wall may have fallen, but the demand to make all of Europe a mirror image of East Berlin is stronger than ever. And it's not just about image and metaphor: walls and barbed wire fences have already been erected around the African Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, a wall between Europe and Africa that is already longer than the Berlin Wall ever was. In other words, the Wall never came down; it has simply been moved. In light of how recently it came down, and how strong the demand for a newer, much longer replacement is, one might say the Berlin Wall was a disgrace mostly in the eyes of the nationalists: it was simply in the wrong place. It should have been built at the Polish border instead. And now that Poland is about to join the European Union, effectively rendering this option redundant, at least we should build a wall between Poland and Russia. And so the first panic-stricken reports are starting to reach us >from the Russian enclave of Kalininograd on the Baltic Sea: they fear they are about

to become... isolated. This should be enough to give Europeans pause. After all, how recently was it that we were driven to tears by images of people smashing up the Berlin Wall? Not so long ago, any West German who helped an East German over the Wall was a hero. Today, a German helping an illegal Russian into the country must be either an anarchist leftist or a human trafficker: a criminal one way or the other. It's the same in many Western countries, where you can no longer marry a foreigner without a thorough investigation into the "validity" of your marriage. Nationality and the right to stay in a Western country are "fringe benefits" of a mixed marriage, and not to be divided equally after the marriage ends. For the alien partner, however, these benefits are fundamental and inalienable rights. Hence the deep distrust shown by governments who seek to bring immigration to a halt at all costs. At the same time, this ought to be an inspiring thought for us: maybe marriage, that supreme symbol of sexual traditionalism, should be recuperated as an act of political progressiveness. We can have another world – let's all marry non-Europeans! And needless to say, so that gays, too, may join in this act of progressive politics, we firmly support the right to same-sex marriage.

A Funerary Migration

It may seem odd that the self-proclaimed keeper of Dutch values and traditions chose not to be buried on Dutch soil. Fortuyn had arranged long ago for his funerary migration to an Italian village, and had already ordered his grave to be built there. According to this Dutchman, Italy was the only place he had ever known happiness. But how could he have chosen to try his luck abroad? Especially when it is obvious that his corpse will never be able to adjust to the peace and quiet of his final resting place. The villagers fear that their usually quiet town will become a tumultuous place of pilgrimage for right-wing extremists and Dutch nationalists. Should Italy allow this Dutch funerary refugee within its territory at all? At the same time, it is probably no coincidence that the nationality rests on only find true happiness as a tourist. The socioeconomic realities of one's homeland never conform to the fictions which the nationalist entertains and seeks to impose on it. Yet it is when they are on holiday that nationalists can experience a country as they prefer to imagine it. Nationalists rarely deny foreign nations their own identities: on the contrary, to each country its own identity. Since tourism is nothing but an identity industry, it is the nationalist's delight. All year long, nationalists live in a reality that has little to do with the ossified national identity they dream of. Only on holiday does this identity do exactly what they want it to: it expresses itself through monuments and architecture, national costumes, traditional processions, ancient and unspoiled landscapes, rituals and customs. Only on holiday do nationalists regain the idea of a nation which they are hard-pressed to find back home.

HERMAN ASSELBERGHS & DIETER LESAGE

Translated from the Flemish © 2002 by Sakhra – l'Assal

l will not attempt to sum up all the projects that Sarai is initiating and facilitating but will briefly go through a few of the activities and feature a subjective melange of projects and people that I became familiar with during my stay. Delhi, as hot and polluted as ever, is undergoing a major transformation. The construction of the subway is well underway. The first line will be opened late this year. Due to the tense situation in Gujarat and Kashmir, Delhi feels under a siege. Surveillance and control have been stepped up; there are police roadblocks here and there. Politically the week was marked by the elections in Jammu and Kashmir, which resulted in a defeat for the ruling National Conference. This party is a partner in the Hindu nationalist BJP led National Democratic Alliance coalition, the current Indian government. Positioning itself 'off the radar,' so far Sarai did not have to deal with state interference. The impression one gets of Sarai is that of a dynamic cultural centre where new media are centre stage but not the sole denominator. Instead, what Sarai drives is a passion for cosmopolitan intellectual debate on contemporary city culture. The central concern of Sarai is the connection between urban culture, media and daily life. The annually pub-

lished Sarai Reader is proof of the strong ties to book culture. At the same time the Sarai server is host to a range of electronic mailinglists, from the South-Asia IT list 'Bytes for All' to a discussion forum on community radio in India.

At Sarai there is a weekly public screening program, using easy to obtain VHS and DVD copies of feature films and documentaries, not 16 or 35 mm. On the program this week an Iranian film (Kandahar by Mohsen Makhmalbaf). The day I arrived Michael Saup of ZKM gave a workshop, which was supported by the Goethe Institute, which itself could not host such technological events. Also there were two Australians doing a residency. In the midst of it all, staff meetings, heaps of them. And yes, there were the occasional electricity cuts. Because of road construction the ISDN connection to the Net had been down for a while but this improved later on in the week.[ii] One of the Sarai founders, Ravi Sundaram, said bandwidth could have been better but that the government was holding up connectivity because of the post-911 security clearance of cable landings.

Let's look into some of the projects. Ravikant, a former historian, is responsible for the language and popular culture program. Hindi is perhaps one the largest language in the world but the illiteracy is also one of the highest.[iii] However, the best books on the Hindi public domain all are written in English. Experts on Hindi film only publish in English. Ravikant's research looks at the implications-and possibilities-of new media for Hindi popular culture. He is the editor of the 'Hindi Media Reader,' a Sarai publication due to come out in November, arguably the first new media publication in Hindi with commissioned articles on free software, satellite channels and tactical media. The reader also contains specific essays about the Indian context. As a first book on these issues, the reader celebrates new media. Ravikant: "The Hindi world has been obsessed with print culture, which rose in the late nineteenth century. Related is the love for literature. But in our age they're more ways of looking at the world. Film and television now constitute language." In the Hindi context it is important to discuss the anxiety between 'high' literature and popular media. The Hindi media reader discusses the relation between the book and the computer.

A Visit to the Sarai New Media Initiative Delhi

Geert Lovink

A year and a half after the new media centre Sarai opened, I returned to Delhi, curious to meet new staff and see how projects have evolved. The centre is a buzzing hub, full of energy. During the six days of my stay I only got a glimpse of what is going on.

ture, a blueprint. It is like a building waiting to be inhabited. It takes some talking to communicate to an art audience what the implications of Opus are." Those familiar with free software immediately understand the basic ideas behind Opus. But they would ask: 'why label it art'? Shuddha: "Certainly. Software questions the boundaries of art. The most interesting response came from a group in Brazil called Recombo who were doing something similar with music. They take the idea of the remix culture literally and built an online architecture for people to make collaborative music. In this way peer-to-peer distribution is extended with peer-to-peer creation. Others are interested in the source code. Now we are translating the Opus ideas into physical space. It is a work commissioned by the Walker Art Center, in collaboration with Atelier Bow Wow, a group of Japanese architects. The show opens in February 2003. We are trying to figure out what kind of analogue manifestations Opus can have in a gallery space."

In August 2002 a delegation from Sarai flew to Sao Paolo to install a work of Raqs Media Collective at the new media arts exhibition Emo, Art.ficial.[xi] The installation called location (n) has eight clocks and eight monitors. Shuddha explains: "The crucial idea is one of time zone. The clocks represent different cities such as Sao Paolo, New York, Lisbon and Delhi. Instead of hours the face of the clock has emotions such as epiphany at 12 o'clock, anxiety, nostalgia. The fun of the work is that visitors can compare the different states of being in each city. The whole room is filled with the sound of a heartbeat, layered on to which are the sounds of global electronic transactions, modems, fax machines, and phones. On the monitors you see a face slowly moving from left to right. It's a mysterious image because it looks like as if the face disappears on one and then reappears on another monitor. The face seems to be travelling between the time zones. We are playing with the Kulishev effect in early cinema where expressions and objects each produce different emotional effects. In our case it was about the expression of the same emotions in different time zones. Globally speaking we always had the same emotions. It's just that there is no singularity. Everyone feels the same but at different points of time."

Open source and free software

My round along the Sarai projects ends with an interesting exchange on free software and open source and the Indian context. Tripta is responsible for the free software public outreach project of Sarai.[xii] Before stumbling into the Linux scene she studied ancient Indian history. In retrospect, Tripta explains, she already encountered open source issues during her study, as she could not access the artifacts and primary sources. Six months ago she became a member of the Delhi Linux User Group.[xiii] At the first meeting she was appointed general secretary. In the beginning her curiosity was born out of activism. The group brought out its own distribution CD and

Figure 1.1

This book is the first complete investigation of global netculture, an analysis of the evolution and involution of the web during the first decade of its mass expansion. But Lovink goes beyond a sociological, economic and anthropological survey. Many of the essays in the book outline the theoretical positions of various agents in the cyber-cultural scene: Wired's libertarian ideology, its economic and neoliberal involution, and the radical pessimism of European philosophers. Outside of such confrontation, Geert's position is that of a radical and pragmatic Northern-European intellectual close to autonomist and cyberpunk movements, who has animated the cyber-cultural scene for a decade with his polymorphous activity as writer and moderator of connective environments such as nettime.org, and as organiser of international meetings.

This book has been published almost simultaneously in the United States and in Italy, it will soon come out in a Spanish and a Japanese edition. Its publication is exceptionally timely, coinciding with an unprecedented storm in the global economic system. In the middle of the storm, in the eye of the cyclone sits the system of webs that multiplied the energies of mass capitalism in the 90s, and that today finds itself on the threshold of a radical redefinition of perspectives. The economic crisis can only be fully explained in rela-

tion to the ideological crisis of the new economy that supported the mass capitalism of the 90s. Similar to Carlo Formenti's 'Mercanti del futuro', Einaudi, this book helps us analyze the actual interlacement of web and economy, and to get a glimpse of what is to come. The 1987 Wall Street crash interrupted the booming cycle that had characterized the first affirmation of Reagan's monetarist and neoliberal policies. During the storm that upset the markets for several weeks, (nothing in comparison to the one to come between 2000 and 2002), analysts offered an interesting explanation: part of the international financial system was being modernized and connected to the internet. Long before the internet entered everyday life, some sectors of international finance had started to make their information systems interdependent in real time.

However, since not all of the international financial system was interconnected - so the experts claimed - the gaps and the incompatibility of the systems of communication disturbed the fluidity of exchanges and prevented a fast and coordinated intervention of American banks. In order to avoid a reoccurrence of these delays in coordination, the informatization of finance and the pervasiveness of systems of telecommunication needed to be perfected. This is what happened in the following years. In the 90's the circuit of in-

formation and financial exchanges was so spread as to allow a capillary and mass participation to the flux of financial investments. The web became the principal support of mass capitalism and sustained its long expansive phase in the last decade of the century. Millions of Americans and Europeans started to invest their money, buying and selling shares from their own homes. The whole financial system became tightly interconnected. Today that long expansive phase has entered into a crisis, and we see that, contrary to 1987, in fact the main danger for the global system is the pervasive character of its connections.

Cultural change

The cultural change we speak about here will not come overnight and might have to be accelerated by conflicts and dialogues. Hackers vs. artist types is a conflict that also exists within Sarai, like in so many new media arts organizations. There are tensions with the first generation of young programmers and the artists/intellectuals. Tripta, trapped between the two, explains: "In both 'camps' there is this arrogance: what I know you won't be able to understand. Then the conversations cease to happen. Techies should be involved on all levels. Programming should not be seen as a commissioned job. Techies have to be fully aware what the ideas behind a certain project is. The problem is: techies at Sarai do not see why technology should be used within arts and culture. They do not see the point of net art and prefer to do 'more substantial' stuff. It is important that these issues are addressed in this space, because if they are not discussed in Sarai, then where would they? Businessmen wouldn't even bother to look into such issues." For Tripta the conflict is all about sensitivities and the backgrounds people come from. She stresses the importance of going to schools. "We are building a web portal for students to put their open content on. That could be a beginning. The continuing use of Microsoft products has led to a closed sensibility towards software. In that sense, the use of open source software in daily life would indeed make a difference. But that's only a long-term solution. For artists and critics it doesn't really matter what software they use. What counts is the openness towards the ideas and the willingness to start the dialogue with programmers."

When I leave Sarai, the staff is examining 120 applications that have arrived for the second round of the seed grants program for students and young researchers. Sarai is committed to generating public knowledge and creativity through research. The Independent Research Fellowship Program is one of Sarai's most successful initiatives. In particular Bangalore initiatives have benefited. Sarai does not just support Delhi-based individuals and initiatives. Themes are as diverse as habitation, sexuality, labour, social/digital interfaces, urban violence, street life, technologies of urban control, health and the city, migration, transportation, etc. Operating within limited space it was clear from the start that Sarai would not be able to expand dramatically in terms of staff and offices. Around 20-30 micro grants will be awarded. Also, preparations are underway for three conferences: a meeting in December about intellectual property rights, a groundbreaking conference about the city in January 2003 and one about 'crisis media,' early March.[xiv] Dazed and encouraged about Sarai's activities, debates and contradictions, I leave Delhi.

GEERT LOVINK
(Edited by Linda Wallace)

Dark Fiber

Franco Bifo Berardi

For many years, Geert Lovink has carried out his work as net-critic

wandering across the territories where the net meets the economy,

politics, social action and art. Years of fast writing on mailing lists,

analysis, polemics, replies and reports have been collected and

elaborated in a way that maintains the rap-style of e-mail debates:

short sentences, ironic slogans, cuts and returns, allusions, cita-

tions...but what emerges from this mosaic is a coherent overall

view on the first decade of digital society.

this time, he expressed a desire to visit France, to facilitate the people of France on the occasion of an anniversary of the revolution of 1789. He was however, asked to procure a visa by the French authorities. Much incensed by this, "uncivilised" demand, he wrote an eloquent and furious letter, in which he implied that the visa, was a violation of the principles of liberty (of movement), of equality (amongst peoples) and the possibility of fraternity (because it effectively prevented people from fraternizing). I am not sure about this, but my hunch is that this is probably the first recorded protest against visas and border controls in the world. By a strange (or not so strange) twist of history. The demonstration that passed the tiny, barely noticeable relief figure of Ram Mohan Roy in Strasbourg, was echoing his anger, almost two centuries later. What was remarkable

was the fact that they like him, (and perhaps like Gutenberg before him) were equally aware of the fact that the control over information is one of the keys to the hold that power has over people, and that their protest was as much against border controls in physical space as it was against borders in virtual space. This again made me think that it is meaningless to single out the internet as 'New Media'. In its own time, the Printing Press was as much 'new' or 'tactical' media as the internet and computers are today. And just as the explosion of 'illicit', subversive, dissident, anti-clerical or even ribald literature that accompanied the proliferation of printing presses in the late eighteenth century prior to and during the revolution of 1789, creating a critical mass of free thinking, so too, the tactical media initiatives of our times could be contributing to a new criti-

cal mass of the freedom of thought in our times. The fact that the database was at the heart of power, makes it impossible to think of a technological articulation of info politics as being always radical. It is as central to power as it is to those who oppose power. To either romanticize new technologies of information and communication as being the standard bearers of the coming revolution, or to paint them in the dystopic colours of state and political control is to forget the fact that it is what we 'do' with information that makes it political, this way or that. The computer can be the appliance of the border guard, and it can be the instrument of the border crosser, a lot depends on who uses, which software to which end, how, and why. </shuddhabrata>

The dark side of Camping

Susanne Lang/Florian Schneider

Camping can be so nice. Crawling out of dewy plastic in the early morning, with a pinch of sleep still in your eyes, braving the unbearably hot sun, yet invigorated and ready to take on the day with as much indifference as possible to the ongoing struggle with nature.

Surely everybody knows that the secret of success is to fight the laws of petty bourgeois civilisation with minimal equipment and therefore gain a flexibility that is capable of suspending the otherwise ruling power relations for a clearly defined amount of time.

But camping can also become a torture, only bearable with a high degree of sarcasm and humour. Nine o'clock in the morning – first barrio meeting. Points of the agenda are illegal beer sales, homemade jam and the use of fresh greenery for campfires. The same discussion enriched with no less substantial issues like common barricade construction and useless empties collection is to take place in the inter-barrio two hours later – at the earliest!

When the results of the supposedly radical-democratic decision-making process have been ventilated within bigger or smaller group connections, the sun has already reached its afternoon zenith. It's high time for the actions: a rabble of some hundred, possibly even like-minded people, heads for the inner-city of Strasbourg with disequilibrium in mind. That means careless, indiscriminate and random demolition of everything that might be seen as the emblems of this symbolic European capital's political meaninglessness: flags, monuments, anything - not to forget that most hated spawn of surveillance and control society; the video cameras, that with 70s charm adorn the facades of many of the public buildings in the city. Nobody is able or willing to say why, but the drive for pointless demolition lasts just as long as the police allow it. In the middle of the week, when the lascivious vigilantes had given up on their pretence at reserve the fun was over. Even so the affects remained. When other venturesome activists set off for some shy street theatre actions or some perky percussion concert they were quickly captured by the CRS riot police and confronted with two humble alternatives: being sent back to the camp or to prison.

The abyss that came to light during the ten days of the first Europe wide No Border Camp from the 19 to 28 of July in Strasbourg is cause for reflection. After the experiences from more than a dozen successful noborder-camps on all kinds of nation state borders, how could such a political travesty, such a strategic and tactical disgrace, occur? How is it possible that approximately 2,000 to 3,000 activists from over twenty different countries were willing to turn themselves in to those smirking police operation controllers, and allow themselves to be processed into a zero-tolerance soup, so delicious and tasty for the mainstream media, that it no doubt made mouths water as far away as the metropolitan Ministry of the Interior? In one sense surely the noborder-camp in Strasbourg was an indisputable success. As is usual for such events there were tons of interesting meetings, valuable exchanges and some exciting debates. But there was more: this experience of ten days in tents revealed a pathological immobility that would not have been visible, if the process would have been overall more felicitous, and followed the usual course of the informal getting to know people, the usual excitement of networking spiced up with smart activism and the euphoric backslapping in the end.

After the positive experiences with other camps on different external European frontiers during the summer 2001, many were hoping that the event in Strasbourg would be part of the jump towards a common European praxis. A praxis that could take on the unified European regime of frontiers - not just in respect to content - but also to give proof of the common self confidence that evolved through all of the different approaches and that enabled it to aim at no less a target than the Schengen Information System (SIS), one of the most important instruments of European migration policies. Giving up on this goal was prob-

ably the worst of the missed opportunities of the No Borders camp, something that was perhaps already visible in the preparations for it. Without even paying lip-service to the diversity and the dissimilitude of the participants, the whole political potential of the heterogeneous mixture of people was sacrificed on the altar of a hypocritical mass consensus. It was bound to turn out this way: with such a lack of commonly shared content, that veered between up-to date anti-Semitism debates and compulsive sexism discussions, from special eating habits to preferences in techniques of street-militancy, such a consensus was only possible through the depiction or evocation of an external antagonistic and repressive machine. Whereas a Europe wide camp with its broad make-up would have been the perfect chance to move beyond the adopted rituals of limitation on movement and indecision disguised as basic democracy, and diffuse that into many different and relating potentials, the tragedy of Strasbourg lay in the overwhelming incapacity to communicate. If the keyword "multitude" is understood to mean more than just the sum of all attendees, the actual challenge seems to lie in relating the different movements to each other as effectively and reasonably as possible. The intention of the noborder camps has always been that this struggle does not remain academic, but will lead to actions and ad-hoc-interventions that, although prepared by a few people are performed by and borne out by as many as possible.

On a European level such intentions demand constant development of new organisational models adaptable to constantly changing situations. The issue is no longer to express a common way of struggle, nor a unified picture or one-dimensional solidarity, neither an ostentatious unity nor a secretly unifying sub-culture, but the profound understanding and the absolute will, to recognize the internal differences and create flexible groups, where different approaches connect with each other reasonably and for mutual benefit. It's about political communication in the best sense: networking understood as situational negotiations that are based on the possibility of changing ones own standpoint as well as the standpoint of the other. Rather than being based on some spurious qualifications of good versus evil, this approach instead seeks out the basics of a reasonable and practical temporal togetherness.

It is not particularly important whether the miserable failure was due to the hegemonic striving of some of the smaller or bigger groups, who are experienced in manipulating ad-hoc meetings and manage to lever a horrible position into place from the outside, or due to the mania of an increasingly grotesque political correctness that is at best capable of creating multilateral non-aggression pacts in issues like anti-Semitism, sexism or racism. Overall the situation revealed how far the introverted and self-referential politics of philistines and holiday-revolutionaries inhibited a constructive debate. A detailed debriefing of the actions of the noborder camp would come up with frustrating results. From the first to the last day the roles were set and the winners were clear. The ridiculous blockade of the bridge was unwarranted, and thus our trump card in the necessary case of defending the camp was spoiled. Moreover the intended demonstration turned out to be a failure, forced to be a hide and seek game. From the beginning on one thing seemed to be pretty evident: the only surprises in the whole affair would come from our adversaries.

Last summer at Frankfurt airport the sovereign noborder activists had been able to leave the dirty work for the police forces. They did not need to block the airport themselves but allowed it happen - the alleged guardians of law and order did that for them. This is not just a metaphorical meaning; the action left the practical problem of mediating the airport blockade to the authorities. Their only way out was to demonise the activists as being even more terrible rogues than imagined before. But instead of a black bloc that justified the police blockade by wanting to smash the whole airport, the noborder camp was triumphant with a classical concert, pink-silver cheerleading and excellent negotiating skills. On this basis many different forms of actions could result in a productive togetherness that didn't even have to be planned and discussed in detail, as long as the common intention existed to extend the scope for action instead of narrowing it. There are several reasons why the opposite principle was dominant in Strasbourg. But there is no excuse for such political naivety in the face of the dramatic turn-around on the first night of the camp that was so sneakily conducted. Whilst most of the people were still busy with the constitution of infrastructure and putting up their tents, one committee took it upon itself to decide to abandon all mediation of the aims and background of the noborder camp. Cooperation with media was totally dismissed due to ideological motives and this was not just to apply to the mainstream media but was also intended to make any kind of public relation work impossible. Negotiations with representatives of the police or the municipality met with disapproval just as much as visits to the camp by journalists, no matter whether they were from Indymedia or the local press.

Clearly, the manner in which the whole event is perceived from the outside will necessarily shift if the simple attempt to mediate ones own positions will be dismissed as opportunistic. : calls for freedom of movement might easily be interpreted as calls for freedom to muck about and act the fool. Who is protesting on the streets and why, which actions have been chosen and for what reason? The history, background, aims and ideas of the camp were concealed. Therefore the press relied on the statements of the police and the mayor. Residents and passer-bys have been left alone to interpret the unintentional Dada of slogans like "freedom is illegal". Whoever thinks that the non-participants should not get a chance to comprehend the protests and to form their own opinion about them, is not just acting negligently and irresponsibly, but are steeped in vanity: pretending to be militant and thus degenerating into shallow expressionism where the only goal is to express one's difference, one's pretence at a radical sensibility and one's crude and awkward search for identities.

But the foolishness of the media ban counts double: because one of the most impressive accomplishments of the noborder-camp was its amazing communicational structure of involving a radio station and tentstudio, internet cafes and mobile workstations, workshops and lectures, video projections and diverse live-streams. But this unique effort of media activists from different countries was derided as a maverick one, spitefully called "silicon valley", rather than seen as an integrated part of the camp that could actually have been useful in daily camp life for internal as well as external communication. In general it was amazing how popular a neo-romantic motivated anti-capitalism had become: the dislike of every means of payment as the reincarnation of the

evil, up to the sign language specially developed for plenary sessions (so that the debaters won't interrupt each other but show hand signals like brokers). Prevalent in those ten days in Strasbourg was a hermetic culture of immediacy that was neglecting and dismissive of every form of

A few weeks ago, I found myself looking down from the window of an airplane on a string of lights on the face of the earth. From the sky, this line of light looked incredibly pretty, as it stretched interminably into the distance. As if marking a landing strip in the middle of nowhere. A place where alien spacecraft from outer space could land, like a set in a film made to resemble "Close Encounters of the Third Kind". As the aircraft hovered momentarily above these lights, the pilot's measured voice, instructed the passengers not to use any photographic equipment or video cameras to record any images. The plane was entering the airspace of the republic which claims me as its citizen. Making unauthorized images of the border was forbidden by law. The border was visible, but it could not be rendered visible. Was it a ghost, an apparition, a spectral aura emanating from the clinical death of the nation state? Although the night made everything other than the lights invisible, I knew that not far from that string of fairy lights, which is in reality, a well lit system of razor wire and electric fences, with periodic watchtowers, ranged across vast distances, spanning deserts, fertile agricultural land, and very high mountains, were ranged - tanks, ballistic missiles, landmines, radar, surveillance equipment, armoured trucks, long range artillery weapons, perhaps a few small tactical ,or "battlefield", (subkiloton range) nuclear weapons and more than a million men - the largest military mobilization since the end of the second world war.

Behind them, at a tangent, on the seas, in the hinterland. and on either side, were paramilitary formations, squadrons of fighter and bomber aircraft, battleships, reserve troops and long range missiles equipped with nuclear warheads. Waiting, to ignite, within hours, if need be. These million men, the forward divisions of two armies, had been at the borders of the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, for almost half a year, as the leadership of both countries, exemplary allies in the global war against terrorism, played war games with each other. (And what a leadership ! A coalition dominated by a far right Hindu party in India, with its hands recently bloodied in the recent Gujarat carnage, disparate for distractions which would take the focus away from Gujarat, and yet another military dictatorship in Pakistan that promised to deliver its people from the oppression of its erstwhile rulers by holding staged and televised referendums to prove its cosmetic legitimacy).

Both were buffeted by mounting discontent at home, the Indian rulers were plagued by election defeats, news of corruption in arms deals, repression and abysmal governance, and the Pakistani junta, well proven masters of sectarian strife and abysmal governance had to prove that they could actually "do" something with the power that they had usurped yet again. The rulers constantly learnt from each other, especially the art of abysmal governance. In pursuing their dangerous tournament of brinkmanship, the rulers in both countries were mounting the pitch of a spiral of provocation in turns, to see who would attack first, who would lose control on the "line of control", sending the entire south asian region, and possibly the world, into the most dangerous crisis that it had ever encountered. It was reassuring to come back to a part of the world that had not really changed since I left home. War had not broken out, it had just continued to threaten to break out, as it had done, and as we had gotten used to it's doing, for months now. The situation, (as they said in the news, all through the years that I was growing up) was tense, but under control: Envoys had come and gone, hotlines had buzzed, George and Tony and Vlad and Li had spoken, and the "world community" had heaved a sigh of relief as Pervez and Atal continued to sulk but not to fight. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, Poland and the United States clinched, or reassured that they indeed intended to honour - the contracts totaling billions of dollars that they had agreed upon, to sell weapons systems and military equipment and spares to one or the other or both of the would be warring parties, in order to enhance security and improve confidence building mechanisms in the region.

artificial or technical supported mediation, due to the fear of it being a hindrance on some amorphous idea of natural self-development. More important than making new contacts - getting to know and understand one another - was to translate every word into three to seven languages.

Contracts and commissions made the Indian republic's ever busy defense minister busier than ever. It was more or less the same for the same for the defense secretary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Pakistan test fired missiles, India test fired rhetoric. The killers in Gujarat stayed where they were, in power. The killings in Kashmir, by the military and the militants, continued. Karachi continued to witness sectarian violence. And the border tightened. The million men stayed where they were. Life carried on, as usual.

Mark on the ground

For me, coming home in July after a months absence, this is what the border means - "Welcome back to your punishments. Welcome home to the permanent absence of peace that is the long wait for war. Fill in your disembarkation cards and declare yourself and your possessions. Let the X Rays rule your bags and your body, and the foul breath of the immigration officer be your first inhalation as you make your way home." The border is the mark on the ground which tells you that wherever you are on earth, hell begins close to home. And you are never far from a border. It doesn't matter in which city, continent or country you are in, the border seeks you out in the end. Not even in a landlocked city like the one in which I live, hundreds of kilometers away from the frontier, is the border a distant reality. Barricades, sandbags and policemen with machine guns successfully transpose the battlefield into my neighbourhood. The routine "checks" of people, the flushing and combing operations to "cleanse" the city of illegal aliens (indigent Bangladeshi rag pickers) are the measures taken to make citizens feel safe and protected, as they cope with power cuts, dry drinking water taps, a crippled transport system, recession, the rising cost of living, and the news of pogroms in other cities. "Our borders are secure, We are secure", this is what you are meant to think when the mornings newspaper informs you in small print, at the back of the inside, "city' pages, on lightening raids in the night in slum settlements to "weed out", "illegal aliens". Sometimes, these "weeds" turn out to be indigent Bangladeshi rag pickers. Sometimes they are Afghan refugees. Sometimes they are carried in trucks, or covered trains to the Pakistani-Indian border, or the Indian-Bangladeshi border, "released", told to run, and left to negotiate the bullets of the border guards on either side, Most end up as shabby trophies to be won in a friendly sharp shooting contest. (The only friendly thing the rival forces know to do ?) Few make it across to anywhere at all. Meanwhile the signs on the walls of my city admonish the populace that "In the fight against terrorism, all citizens are soldiers", or "If you want to live, you must learn how to die", or simply "Be Vigilant, Who is the stranger next to you".

State at war

But what is true of my city, is true (give or take a few degrees of insanity) in every city. Because everywhere, the state is at war with those it rules. It just does not want to admit to this fact. I have watched the CRS (Special Armed Police) strut its stuff in the Paris metro with german shepherds and Uzis, and I know that I am at the border again. I have looked into the steely eyes of the NYPD officer as he asks me very politely if I could hand him any ID that I might be carrying on me, as I make to enter a public building - and I know that I am at the border again. The border courses through me when I spot a familiar car and a special branch policeman in plain clothes having tea in a neighbourhood tea shop. The border sneaks into my computer and reads my e mail, and whispers to me in the hum in my phone. The Border is a war movie turned into a nightmare in a burning cinema.

None of us, any where in the world, belongs in the right place, because nowhere does the world belong to us. We are all bereft of the dignity that is proper to human beings because we are all prisoners of war. While it may make strategic sense for us to say, "No one is illegal" for the purpose of a specific campaign to protect the rights of people who would otherwise be deported, from one country back to another where they might be

And the less actual communication there was, the greater the longing for the unifying force of repression, to be the victim of that omnipresent conspiracy called globalisation and to stand on the right side of oppression.

imprisoned or shot or be homeless again , we must understand that in the end, they stand to be punished for being who they are in either place - where they are fleeing from, as well as where they are fleeing to. We cannot lose sight of the fact that often, in reality , "No one is legal" .

But isn't it all because of terrorism, because we all need to be protected from the sleeping suicide bomber in our midst, who might just wake and decide to act according to the manual? If the terrorist didn't exist, he would have to be invented. Terrorists-in-training are invariably, statesmen-in-waiting, and if they win their big or little state or sanctuary they become moderate leaders who queue up to fight the good fight against terrorism, maintaining the order necessary for the gears of industry and trade (and relief and rehabilitation) to run smoothly in their own backyard. Remember the recent history of that peaceful country called Afghanistan?

Sometimes things do turn out the other way. Responsible, moderate leaders and allies of the free world against Islamic fundamentalism, or left wing subversion (like Saddam Hussain, or Manuel Noriega) become, due to the accidental turns in history, international shipping and petroleum pipelines, the dictators of rogue or terrorist states, or drug barons. Yesterday's eager arms traders call for today's sanctions to make them fall. The way things are progressing, what is Iraq today, may well be India tomorrow, and Pakistan could be Panama.

If "enemies", and "foreign hands", and "the foreigners who pollute our culture and take away our jobs" were not around, the state, and capitalism would be in serious trouble. The real nature of beast, the crisis that capitalism is in, would sink deep into all our conscious, acting minds, and we might even start doing something to get rid of it, across the world. The figure of the enemy, of "the other", the intruder, that makes borders necessary, is an entity given shape, reality and substance by those who rule in a bid to ensure that the people who are ruled always blame "others" for the mess of the world.

The border is the border

And there are enough trigger happy prophets waiting to trade in on victimhood and suffering to fly yet another flag for holy war or national liberation. And so, just to cite an instance, the Kashmiri militant , the Pakistani patriot and the Indian nationalist continue to be each other's raison d'être, unable to live or die in peace, dancing the bizarre troika that promises freedom and dignity to each Indian, Pakistani and Kashmiri person, but delivering nothing but bombs , bullets and (more) borders instead. For Kashmiri, Indian, Pakistani, read Kurd, Turk, Iraqi, or Palestinian, Israeli, Jordanian. The results remain, more or less, the same, regardless of identity or geography. The border is the border, no matter where it stands. This is true even in a city called Ahmedabad, in a province called Gujarat, in a country called India, where a street between neighbourhoods of communities called Hindu and Muslim has been called the "border" for a long time. This was true in Beirut, Belfast and in Sarajevo. Borders are layers as well as lines. Every border checkpoint, each passport control in every airport, harbour and border crossing in the world is a reminder that we are all prisoners in this vast labyrinth of hell, which is what the totality of nation states is and always has been on the face of the earth. The rituals of the border - the identification of people by the papers and numbers they carry, the screening of the more guilty from the less guilty, (no one is innocent, those of us who pass the border controls with stamps on our papers are only being told that there is as yet insufficient proof to detain and punish us, and this need not be the case the next time that we pass these gates) the scrutiny of our belongings and persons, the entries made into the record books of our lives, and the impressions our passage makes on expanding databases and surveillance cameras, - each one of these little details are the incremental trials and tribulations of our expanding hell. The border is the line that encompasses it all, the border is the system of concentric cir-

Borders: Walking Across, as opposed to Flying Above

Shuddhabrata Sengupta

This text was written in July, at the height of the tension on the border between India and Pakistan. Following elections in Pakistan,

and in the Indian administered part of Kashmir, the two countries

have agreed to de-escalate and troops on both sides are now on

their way back to "peace time" positions. Relations between the

two governments however, continue to be tense.

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cles that generates its infinite layers, spanning the distance from the frontier to your epidermis.

A line in the sand was drawn in blood in 1947, in the part of the world where I live, marking the birth of two nation states, and later, the birth of a third one, and now it may or may not see the birth of yet another one. I am claimed as the citizen of one of the original pair. No matter how many or how few the states that are born, that line in the sand refuses to stop bleeding. Even

Are we in a war? Do we have an enemy?

Slavoj Zizek

When Donald Rumsfeld designated the imprisoned Taliban fighters

'unlawful combatants' (as opposed to 'regular' prisoners of war),

he did not simply mean that their criminal terrorist activity placed

them outside the law: when an American citizen commits a crime,

even one as serious as murder, he remains a 'lawful criminal'.

The distinction between criminals and non-criminals has no relation to that between 'lawful' citizens and the people referred to in France as the 'Sans Papiers'. Perhaps the category of homo sacer, brought back into use by Giorgio Agamben in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), is more useful here. It designated, in ancient Roman law, someone who could be killed with impunity and whose death had, for the same reason, no sacrificial value. Today, as a term denoting exclusion, it can be seen to apply not only to terrorists, but also to those who are on the receiving end of humanitarian aid (Rwandans, Bosnians, Afghans), as well as to the Sans Papiers in France and the inhabitants of the favelas in Brazil or the African American ghettos in the US.

Concentration camps and humanitarian refugee camps are, paradoxically, the two faces, 'inhuman' and 'human', of one sociological matrix. The logic of homo sacer is clearly discernible in the way the Western media report from the occupied West Bank: when the Israeli Army, in what Israel itself describes as a 'war' operation, attacks the Palestinian police and sets about systematically destroying the Palestinian infrastructure, Palestinian resistance is cited as proof that we are dealing with terrorists. This paradox is inscribed into the very notion of a 'war on terror' - a strange war in which the enemy is criminalised if he defends himself and returns fire with fire. The al-Qaida terrorists are not enemy soldiers, nor are they simple criminals. What is emerging in the guise of the Terrorist on whom war is declared is the unlawful combatant, the political Enemy excluded from the political arena.

We no longer have wars in the old sense of a conflict between sovereign states in which certain rules apply. Two types of conflict remain: struggles between groups of homo sacer - 'ethnic-religious conflicts' which violate the rules of universal human rights, do not count as wars proper, and call for a 'humanitarian pacifist' intervention on the part of the Western powers - and direct attacks on the US or other representatives of the new global order, in which case we merely have 'unlawful combatants' resisting the forces of universal order. We no longer have an opposition between war and humanitarian aid: the same intervention can function at both levels simultaneously. Perhaps the ultimate image of the 'local population' as homo sacer is that of the American war plane flying above Afghanistan: one can never be sure whether it will be dropping bombs or food parcels.

Homo sacer

This concept of homo sacer allows us to understand the numerous calls to rethink the basic elements of contemporary notions of human dignity and freedom that have been put out since 11 September. Exemplary here is Jonathan Alter's Newsweek article 'Time to Think about Torture' (5 November 2001), with the ominous subheading: 'It's a new world, and survival may well require old techniques that seemed out of the question.' Even the 'liberal' argument cited by Alan Dershowitz is suspect: 'I'm not in favour of torture, but if you're going to have it, it should damn well have court approval.' When, taking this line a step further, Dershowitz suggests that torture in the 'ticking clock' situation is not directed at the prisoner's rights as an accused person (the information obtained will not be used in the trial against him, and the torture itself would not formally count as punishment), the underlying premise is even more disturbing, implying as it does that one should be allowed to torture people not as part of a deserved punishment, but simply because they know something. Why not go further still and legalise the torture of prisoners of war who may have information, which could save the lives of hundreds of our soldiers? It is absolutely crucial that one does not elevate this desperate choice into a universal principle: given the unavoidable and brutal urgency of the moment,

though the clinical death of the nation state as a form of human social organization occurred a while ago, and even though rigour-mortis has already set well in. The state is un-dead, like vampires are. This line in the sand has seen three full blown wars, and a fourth half blown war, may yet be waiting for a fifth one, and continues to witness a constant skirmish, and the deaths and displacements of many hundreds of thousands of people. I want this line in the sand they call the border, and all lines in the sand that they call

one should simply do it. Only in this way, in the very prohibition against elevating what we have done into a universal principle, do we retain a sense of guilt, an awareness of the inadmissibility of what we have done.

Admitting torture as a topic of debate changes the entire field, while outright advocacy remains merely idiosyncratic. The idea that, once we let the genie out of the bottle, torture can be kept within 'reasonable' bounds, is the worst liberal illusion, if only because the 'ticking clock' example is deceptive: in the vast majority of cases torture is done for quite different reasons (to punish an enemy or to break him down psychologically, to terrorise a population etc). Any consistent ethical stance has to reject such pragmatic-utilitarian reasoning. Here's a simple thought experiment: imagine an Arab newspaper arguing the case for torturing American prisoners; think of the explosion of comments about fundamentalist barbarism and disrespect for human rights that would cause.

State of emergency

But is today's rhetoric not that of a global emergency in the fight against terrorism, legitimising more and more suspensions of legal and other rights? America is, after all, as President Bush said immediately after 11 September, in a state of war. The problem is that America is, precisely, not in a state of war, at least not in the conventional sense of the term (for the large majority, daily life goes on, and war remains the exclusive business of state agencies). With the distinction between a state of war and a state of peace thus effectively blurred, we are entering a time in which a state of peace can at the same time be a state of emergency.

Such paradoxes provide the key to the way in which the liberal-totalitarian emergency of the 'war on terror' relates to the authentic revolutionary state of emergency. When a state institution proclaims a state of emergency, it does so by definition as part of a desperate strategy to avoid the true emergency and return to the 'normal course of things'. It is a feature of all reactionary proclamations of a 'state of emergency' that they were directed against popular unrest ('confusion') and presented as a resolve to restore normalcy. In Argentina, in Brazil, in Greece, in Chile, in Turkey, the military proclaimed a state of emergency to curb the 'chaos' of overall politicisation. Reactionary proclamations of a state of emergency are in actuality a desperate defence against the real state of emergency.

Lesson to be learned

There is a lesson to be learned here from Carl Schmitt. The division friend/enemy is never just a recognition of factual difference. The enemy is by definition always (up to a point) invisible: it cannot be directly recognised because it looks like one of us, which is why the big problem and task of the political struggle is to provide/construct a recognisable image of the enemy which will make it into an appropriate target of hatred and struggle. After the collapse of the Communist states which provided the figure of the Cold War Enemy, the Western imagination entered a decade of confusion and inefficiency, looking for suitable schematisations of the Enemy, sliding from narco-cartel bosses to the succession of warlords of so-called 'rogue states' (Saddam, Noriega, Aïdid, Milosevic) without stabilising itself in one central image; only with 11 September did this imagination regain its power by constructing the image of bin Laden, the Islamic fundamentalist, and al-Qaida, his 'invisible' network. Our pluralistic and tolerant liberal democracies continue to rely on the binary logic Friend/Enemy and add a reflexive twist to it. This 'renormalisation' has involved the figure of the Enemy undergoing a fundamental change: it is no longer the Evil Empire, i.e. another territorial entity, but an illegal, secret, almost virtual worldwide network in which lawlessness (criminality) coincides with 'funda-

mentalist' ethico-religious fanaticism - and since this entity has no positive legal status, the new configuration entails the end of international law which, at least from the onset of modernity, regulated relations between states.

When the Enemy serves as the 'quilting point' (the Lacanian point de capiton) of our ideological space, it is in order to unify the multitude of our actual political opponents. Capitonnage is the operation by means of which we identify/construct a sole agency that 'pulls the strings' behind a multitude of opponents. In today's 'war on terror', the figure of the terrorist Enemy is also a condensation of two opposed figures, the reactionary 'fundamentalist' and the Leftist resistent. The ominous feature underlying all these phenomena is the metaphoric universalisation of the signifier 'terror'. 'Terror' is thus elevated to become the hidden point of equivalence between all social evils. How, then, are we to break out of this predicament?

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An epochal event took place in Israel in January and February: hundreds of reservists refused to serve in the Occupied Territories. These refuseniks are not simply 'pacifists': in their public proclamations, they are at pains to emphasise that they have done their duty in fighting for Israel in the wars against the Arab states, in which some of them were highly decorated. What they claim is that they cannot accept to fight 'in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people'. Their claims are documented by detailed descriptions of atrocities committed by the Israel Defence Forces, from the killing of children to the destruction of Palestinian property. Palestinians, and even Israeli Arabs (officially full citizens of Israel), are discriminated against in the allocation of water, in the ownership of land and countless other aspects of daily life. More important is the systematic micro-politics of psychological humiliation: Palestinians are treated, essentially, as evil children who have to be brought back to an honest life by stern discipline and punishment. Arafat, holed up and isolated in three rooms in his Ramallah compound, was requested to stop the terror as if he had full power over all Palestinians. There is a pragmatic paradox in the Israeli treatment of the Palestinian Authority (attacking it militarily, while at the same time requiring it to crack down on the terrorists in its own midst) by which the explicit message (the injunction to stop the terror) is subverted by the very mode of delivery of that message. Would it not be more honest to say that what is untenable about the Palestinian situation is that the PA is being asked by the Israelis to 'resist us, so that we can crush you'? What if the true aim of the present Israeli intrusion into Palestinian territory is not to prevent future terrorist attacks, but effectively to rule out any peaceful solution for the foreseeable future?

The point is not the cruel and arbitrary treatment of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories but that they are reduced to the status of homo sacer, objects of disciplinary measures and/or even humanitarian help, but not full citizens. And what the refuseniks have achieved is a reconceptualisation of the Palestinian from homo sacer to 'neighbour': they treat Palestinians not as 'equal full citizens', but as neighbours in the strict Judeo-Christian sense. And there resides the difficult ethical test for contemporary Israelis: 'Love thy neighbour' means 'Love the Palestinian,' or it means nothing at all. This refusal, significantly downplayed by the major media, is an authentic ethical act. It is here that there effectively are no longer Jews or Palestinians, full members of the polity and homines sacri. An awareness of moments like this is the best antidote to the anti-semitic temptation often clearly detectable among critics of Israeli politics.

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Empire

came out in the US at the beginning of 2000 and in Italy two years later. In between the two towers collapsed. One would have expected the Italian edition to have an additional chapter on S11 like many other political books that came out this year. You didn't add one, is it because the event was not epochal or because it did not constitute a surprise for your thesis?

The event was very relevant but it confirmed one of the fundamental theses of the book i.e. the end of American insularity and the difference between telluric and maritime nations. The fact that New York could be bombed like London, Berlin and Tokyo confirmed that the process of formation of the new global order was fully deployed. The fact that Al Qaeda had attacked the symbols of American economic power was a sign of the 'civil war' for imperial leadership. What is absolutely new with respect to the book's structure is the fact that the American reaction is configuring itself as a regressive backlash contrary to the imperial tendency. It is an imperialist backlash with-in and against Empire that is linked to old structures of power, old methods of command, and a monocratic and substantialist conception of sovereignty that represents a counter tendency with respect to the molecular and relational characters of the imperial bio-power that we had analysed. The gravity of the situation today lies in this contradicton.

How do you explain it?

S11 occurred the moment when the conservatives were gaining ground in the U.S. through the program of safeguarding national interests that were penalised by the political economic and social process of construction of empire. The group that went to power with Bush is exquisitely reactionary, linked to a populist rather than ultra-liberalist ideology and to the maintainence of certain mega structures of American power such as control of energy and the development of the industrial military complex. These people have remained sidelined to the third industrial revolution and do not want to take it further, they are hostile to it since the new economy has gone into crisis, and they have no hypothesis of alternative in mind other than a return to reliance on tradition.

The contradiction you mention is not a negligible. It makes the process of costruction of empire much more accidental than you had described it...

It is a serious contradiction: it reminds us of the reaction of nationalisms to the changes of scenery in the 30s. Anything could happen; the tension between the growth of the world market and these regressive pulsations of the American administration pushes the situation to an extreme limit.

...With the war as physiological instrument of intervention and self-legitimation, Empire had said this too...

Yes. The war becomes a preventive police operation – careful, this does not mean that it is softer than traditional war: for the first time since the containment the U.S. entertained the idea of using the atomic bomb. International organisations are pushed aside without the least decorum, on the Kyoto protocol as much as the international criminal tribunal, as well as the war on Iraq.

Will Bush's administration manage to take forward this project? If the imperialist backlash is in such a contradiction with the imperial trend, so anachronistic, can one hope that it will meet with obstacles and resistances?

It is difficult to evaluate this: apart from everything there is an element of bluffing in Bush's behaviour that is the perfect correlative to Bin Laden's bluff. At the level of international politics, there are signs of a radical refusal of the American position, both in Europe and – despite the adherence to the anti-terrorist coalition – in Russia and China; but there are no leading groups capable of expressing it and pushing it forward. The real obstacle to Bush comes more from the markets: markets don't want a war.

Are you convinced of this? Wouldn't the war help to relaunch the economy?

No. The American economy would only be relaunched by the second world war, not by a police operation against Iraq, which would only have negative effects on savings in the U.S. and bring confusion to the Islamic markets. Moreover, contrary to what the early 90s revolution in mili-

tary affairs sustains, it does not contain strong elements of technological innovation: it requires military investments of a traditional kind, despite the fact that the structure of the army has changed in the opposite, imperial sense. It is a full regression at the military level too: it isn't surprising that vast sectors of the military apparatus are contrary to the intervention in Iraq.

What about the social level? What chance does the umpteenth call to arms have in obtaining the consensus it needs?

It seems to me that Bush would go to war with a weak consensus that will not be strengthened by a call to patriotism. A social crisis is emerging in the U.S. and the government pretends not to see it. Bush's administration took power the moment when the neo-liberal wave had taken all there was to take. Then the crisis of the market shares arrived and in a society of salaries like the American one where the redistribution of wealth largely takes place through the financial market, a crisis of the financial market touches on the low incomes and becomes a crisis of the entire community. Of course in such a situation of potential social crisis, there emerges the political weakness of the American system i.e. a system reliant upon the media and the control of public opinion; and there are no counter-tendencies with respect to the governmental trend in the media.

I wouldn't be so sure about that. The media operate at the linguistic-symbolic level and at that level the shifts can be less predictable and faster than at the political one.

I don't know. I can't see significant shifts between the semiotic and the social. The system of American media is too closed and self-referential.

Can anything happen at the electoral level? In November there will be elections for Congress in the U.S. Is it not secondary whether Bush wins or loses.

Obviously everyone hopes that the Democrats win, however weak and minimal the alternative that they would be capable of is. But my impression is that at the electoral level the essential has already occurred, and this consists in an important modification of the very electoral. There are important sectors of American society who have moved to the right, firstly the Jewish component, with the consequent displacement of the democratic political class that was traditionally linked to it. Bush took over an alliance between this Jewish right and the Christian extreme right, as well as the Hispanic community. I do not think these ethnic electoral borders are rigid per se but so long as the politics of Israel keeps rigidifying them there is little to do.

What caused this shift to the right of the Jewish component? Is it a defensive appeal to identity?

It is because the diaspora has lost. The figure of diaspora, that meant the difference of always being other and that's why we liked it, has been defeated. And this weighs enormously on the Middle East question, which today really presents itself as a C19th residue in the global world. We wrote this in Empire: the end of the socialist revolution entails processes of re-feudalisation, more or less similar to what happened after the reformation. Another backlash: the question is to understand whether it will be stabilised.

I summarise: S11 revealed so to speak the accomplished globalisation and the process of imperial constitution in the making. The political and military American response is reactionary, it takes that process backwards and appeals to forms and methods that are nationalist and imperialist i.e. anti-imperial, or at least it tries to do so even though we do not know if it will succeed. It seems to me that the progressive antibodies, the forces that can push towards empire you identify in the markets and multi-national corporations rather than politics, at least institutional politics...

I find it also in other contradictions that are opened up. The militarisation of power for instance: if the war becomes a constant element of political legitimation, generals become the true governors, as we can already see in Bush's administration which is full of generals, and since the armies evolve towards mercenaries, the process of corruption of imperial strategies can run very fast. Crisis and corruption are powerful elements in the erosion of power. They open up to strategies of opposition and exodus such as the refusal to pay taxes to finance war expenses.

There is little to be expected from institutional politics and the weak alternating between right and left of western democracies. But what about that you and Hardt called counter-empire, the multitude? Since S11 the movement of movements has stopped, especially in the U.S. what cards does it hold in its hands?

Two: exodus and resistance. And it must play both. Exodus i.e. abstaining from the game, refusal, demonstrating that it is on a different side with respect to the current game, all this is the radical behaviour that the whole events around S11 deserve. But at the same time, faced with returns to barbarism, it is necessary to pose resistance on a terrain of possible encounter with reformists. The movement can only be constructed on exodus, but it must also exercise resistance. This is because power does not let you practice exodus in peace; it continuously attacks. Hence either exodus becomes militant and combative or it loses. You must exercise force even when you'd rather not, especially when you would rather not: the adversary imposes it. The problem is to understand how, how to play the creative surplus of the multitude in real relations of force. The problem is to understand which topology of resistance needs to be designed and which practices – even singular – to put into practice. How to fight against the war, which alliances to build with the imperial reformist aristocracies...all this needs to be thought about.

There is more if I may. The multitude is made up of men and women. The freedom gained by women in the last decades of the C20th already put into practice exodus from the logic of power. In feminised societies such as ours [not Italy presumably – ed] these are relevant to the prediction of how the game will turn out. A great difference with respect to the thirties is the possibility of the lack of feminine consensus to the seduction of power and the strategies of war. Even though the backlash is felt at this level too: as there are backlashes of imperialism on empire, there are also patriarchal regurgitations at the end of patriarchy in the east and the west and these are clearly painful regurgitations. In this situation it is a question wagering - personally for instance I feel like betting that the patriarchal backlash is not a winner on womens freedom.

I see patriarchal regurgitations very well, Bush's position is patriarchal, Bin Laden's too and maybe even Arafats...but you must be able to concretise and configure politically the feminine exodus too. I know very well that the multitude, men and women, is full of potential, but the situation is very dramatic and it would not be the first time that a process full of potential gets blocked and distorted.

Like many others you focus on Europe in your project. I'll make to you the same objection I made to others. European history is not militant in favour of an advantage of Europe over the U.S. in facing the political and social challenges of the global world. As we read in Empire it is the American constitution based on open frontiers and the inclusion of differences to have the upper hand over the European one made of rigid frontiers and national identities.

From an historical point of view you are right, but today Europe is the space given to us for any political project. This is because it is a space inhabited by social forces – strata of productive intellectual labour – that are interested in new social organisation. If built from below, mobilising the multitudes, a united Europe can be a terrain on which to exercise a subversive function of the global order. Last but not least. Empire is not an anti-American book even though it does not under estimate the weight of the U.S. in imperial strategies. We cannot hide though that today, also due to the stupidity of the reactionary strategy of Bush, on the left anti-americanism grows even amongst the anti-globalisation movement itself. This seems to me a confused, wrong and even dangerous position, to you?

I completely agree as it is obvious from what I have clearly said so far, I am extremely critical of the American government and any sensical person could not be otherwise. But to think that Bush's government is America does not make any sense. Despite all that is happening, American society is still a completely open machine. Therefore even if Bush's project is monocratic and imperialist it is wrong to regard the United States as such as monocratic and imperialist. But there is more: the anti-american position coincides with a

The clash in the western mind

Antonio Negri

Empire's commercial success indicates how the interpretative proposal of the book resonates with the reality of the present. The proposal has become, thorough agreement or disagreement, a compulsory point of reference in the debate on the global world. S11 intercepts it, is interrogated by it and interrogates it: especially the relationship between the form of Imperial sovereignty outlined in the book and the actual American policy. The latter seems to be characterised as a traditional imperialist state that aims to redesign the geo-political borders of the planet by mobilising national identities more than as global decentred and deterritorialised Empire that administers hybrid identities and flexible hierarchies with no recourse to ethnic, national traditions and values.



position of reevaluation and defense of the nation state as the anti-imperialist trench – this is a temptation not extraneous to some sections of the movement of movements, as we have seen in

But now that the cold war has faded away, a very different struggle for survival is emerging. It is becoming clear that humanity is facing a triple security crisis: societies everywhere have to contend with the effects of environmental decline, the repercussions of social inequities and stress, and the dangers arising out of an unchecked arms proliferation that is a direct legacy of the cold war period. We are at a historic juncture in our understanding of security. The cold war represented the most extreme expression of "national security" - states' desire to protect their borders and territories from foreign invasions, which led over the centuries to the creation of ever-larger standing armies and the development of ever more sophisticated weapons. Concerns about "human security" are now magnified by the unprecedented scale of environmental degradation, by the presence of immense poverty in the midst of extraordinary wealth, and by the fact that social, economic, and environmental challenges are no longer limited to particular communities and nations.

The cold war can be seen as a relatively brief interlude, a curious historical diversion that distracted our energies from the most basic threats to human society. Unfortunately, a lasting impact of that period is the unparalleled and largely uncontrolled worldwide availability of arms of all calibers. The cold war's rigid bipolarity has fallen by the wayside, making room for a more multipolar world in which countries do not automatically rally behind a leader, in which constellations of power and interest seem more transient, and in which diverging interests or rivalries are resurfacing even among old allies. But the cold war structure has not been replaced by any coherent set of multilateral policies, arrangements, and institutions. And it is difficult to marshal the political support and resources necessary to respond to "non-traditional" challenges.

Transformation of conflict

The world has always been more complex than it seemed through the one-dimensional lens of cold war priorities. Yearning for the predictability they had grown accustomed to over the past half-century, however, many policymakers and pundits perceive the world to be suddenly more disorderly, even chaotic. The world already experienced a transformation of conflict during the cold war: a shift from war between sovereign states to fighting within societies, so that armed conflict conforms less and less to the preoccupations with fending off foreign invasions that are the concerns of traditional national security doctrines. Far from the traditional image of war - national armies clashing on a well-defined battlefield - violent conflict today increasingly involves protagonists within rather than between countries. The "battlefield" can be anywhere, and the distinction between combatants and non-combatants is blurred.

As many countries may be bordering on war as are actually engaged in it. Highly inequitable social and economic conditions remain in place that trigger cycles of uprisings by the disadvantaged and oppression by the ruling elites: generalized lawlessness and banditry - whether by marauding ex-soldiers (in several African nations), drug cartels (in Colombia), or various forms of organized crime (in Russia) as well as a growing privatization of security and violence - in the form of legions of private security guards, the proliferation of small arms among the general population, and the spread of vigilante and "self-defense" groups.

Failed states

The post-cold war era is increasingly witnessing a phenomenon of what some have called "failed states" - the implosion of countries like Rwanda, Somalia, Yugoslavia, and others. But they are only the most explicit examples of the pressures and vulnerabilities of the current era - victims of an array of underlying forces that many other countries are subjected to but have managed, for the time being at least, to cope with more successfully. The outcome in the case of these unsettled nation-states is by no means preordained: it may be prolonged drift, a gradual revitalization of

Porto Alegre. However this would really be a wrong posture since it would prevent an understanding of how the world is made, who has got the command and who can subvert it.

society, establishment of an authoritarian regime that will crack down hard on any sign of opposition in an attempt to "hold the country together," or a splintering of society. The outbreak of civil wars and the collapse of entire societies is now routinely being ascribed to the resurfacing of "ancient ethnic hatreds" revolving around seemingly irreconcilable religious and cultural differences, and so forecloses any rational analysis of the roots and origins of contemporary conflicts. Of course, ethnic tensions do play some role. Some 40 percent of all countries have populations from five or more different "nations," roughly half of the world's countries have experienced some kind of interethnic strife in recent years. Yet a multi-cultural society need not involve conflict. Where ethnic tensions do exist, they did not arise in a vacuum. One of the continuing legacies of colonial and imperial rule is that boundaries are often arbitrary. As a result, people of the same culture, language, or ethnicity often found themselves separated by international borders and grouped with people of other backgrounds and origins, irrespective of whether they had previously coexisted peacefully, been at odds, or had no significant contact at all. To steady their rule, colonial administrations typically favored one local group, often a minority, over others - generating a fatal resentment.

Following independence, civic life in many of these states continued to be split along ethnic lines, with one group ruling at the direct expense of the other. Given severe economic underdevelopment and undemocratic, often repressive patterns of governance, the competition for power and resources among contending groups became intense. In light of the vulnerable status of minorities in multiethnic states, it is no surprise that separatist sentiments abound. We need to look beyond the easy excuse of "ancient hatreds" and "tribal bloodletting" to detect the underlying stress factors that help cause the fighting: disputes are often sharpened or even triggered by glaring social and economic inequities - explosive conditions that are exacerbated by the growing pressures of population growth, resource depletion, and environmental degradation.

Disparities in wealth and power are growing both within countries and among them, as the rich are gaining at the direct expense of the poor and the middle classes. Environmental degradation and resource depletion are triggering or aggravating internal and international conflict, and are likely to become even more important in future years as climate change exacerbates the situation. Together these conditions turn rapidly growing numbers of people into migrants or refugees, and the magnitude and speed of these population movements in turn makes them a factor in generating conflict. Accompanied by weak political systems that are increasingly seen as illegitimate and incapable of attending to people's needs, these pressures can lead to the wholesale fragmentation of societies. As people turn to ethnic, religious, or other group-based organizations for assistance, protection, and identity, relations with other groups often deteriorate.

The social, economic, and environmental trends that are key to human security are increasingly being shaped not only by the fragmentation implied in the rise of "tribalism," but also by globalization. Trade, investment, travel, and communications tie countries and communities more closely together. Although the nation-state is far from being eclipsed, countries and national governments have less and less ability to shape their own destinies. The meaning of borders, community, and sovereignty is in flux, and that in turn makes national (as opposed to global) security a more tenuous concept.

Erosion of the welfare state

Economic globalization is now principally a corporate-driven process, going hand in hand with privatization, deregulation, and the erosion of the social welfare state. Given the relative ease of relocating factories and shifting investment resources across the planet, the pressure on communities and countries to remain competitive and offer an inviting investment climate is tre-

Antonio Negri interviewed by Ida Dominijanni
Translated by Arianna Bove/Erik Empson

mendous. In part, this means downward pressure on wages, and a trend toward a low-common-denominator world with regard to working conditions, social welfare, and environmental regulations. Increasingly, these pressures affect even the better-off communities and the well-trained workers. Although global integration also holds promise, there is an enormous gap between the rapid extension of boundary-crossing activities and efforts to create effective, democratic structures to deal with the consequences of vastly increased interdependence and to shape the globalization process so that it benefits human populations across the planet more broadly. While national sovereignty is becoming more circumscribed, global governance structures remain weak. The phenomena of globalization and fragmentation and the nature of the social, economic, and environmental pressures worldwide call for a fundamentally different understanding of the meaning of security - Who is to be secure, and by what means? - and hence for a new set of priorities.

Conditioned by a worldview that largely equates security with military strength, traditional analysts tend to regard emerging issues simply as new "threats" to be deterred. By subsuming these new issues under the old thinking of national military security, efforts to address them in effect become militarised: weapons proliferation is countered by developing new weapons for preemptive raids on foreign arms facilities instead of by promoting disarmament; refugees are seen as menacing hordes to be intercepted on the high seas instead of as people forced from their homes by poverty; environmental degradation is seen as simply another item in which national interests are to be protected against those of other nations instead of acknowledging the common challenge; and the proliferation of drugs is tackled through the military eradicating cocaine crops instead of through efforts to provide alternative livelihoods for desperate peasants. But many sources of conflict are simply not amenable to any military "solution." Poverty, unequal distribution of land, and the degradation of ecosystems are among the most real and pressing issues undermining people's security. Soldiers, tanks, or warplanes are at best irrelevant in this context, and more likely an obstacle. The military absorbs substantial resources that could help reduce the potential for violent conflict if invested in health, housing, education, poverty eradication, and environmental sustainability. The twentieth century has seen the pursuit of "national security" elevated to near theological levels; modern military technology has dramatically increased the destructive power of weaponry, the range and speed of delivery vehicles, and the sophistication of targeting technologies. Yet arms ostensibly designed to enhance security increasingly imperil humanity's survival. An understanding of security consonant with the realities of today's world requires a shift from conflict-laden to cooperative approaches, from national to global security. Instead of defense of the status quo, human security calls for change and adaptation; instead of a fine-tuning of arms and recalibration of military strategies, it calls for demilitarization, conversion of war-making institutions, and new priorities for sustainable development.

The Transformation of Security

Michael Renner

For 50 years, sustained by the cold war, "security" has been de-

defined primarily in military terms. While the East-West ideological

and military standoff divided much of the planet into two hostile

camp, many issues of the day were subordinated to one overriding

goal: striving for global supremacy. Backed by doomsday nuclear

arsenals, the cold war adversaries were locked in mortal competi-

tion.