The Fulcrum of the Present Crisis: Some Thoughts on Revolutionary Strategy

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The Cult of Mass, Lionization of Protest Culture & Other Industrial Age Holdovers

Protest Culture. The so-called "cargo cults" of New Guinea, Micronesia and Melanesia evolved in response to the influx of American manufactured goods during World War II. Native islanders identified the goods – at least in the received version of the story – not with any material process of production in the countries it came from, but with the proliferation of air bases and air fields in their own countries. The cargo cults, accordingly, operated on the principle of sympathetic magic to stimulate the further delivery of Western manufactured goods by building airplanes and air control centers out of woven bamboo.

Richard Feynman later applied this phenomenon, by analogy, to what he called "cargo cult science." Cargo cult science equates "science" to incidental features of science like test tubes and lab coats, with no understanding of what constitutes real science: the experimental method.

More generally, a "cargo cult" in any field of human endeavor is an attempt to generate a social phenomenon by replicating all the incidents and stage props commonly identified with it in the public mind.

There's a danger, in a period of upheavals like the Arab Spring, Occupy, M15, Syntagma, and subsequent networked movements, of our being led astray by a revolutionary cargo cult. The danger is that we will identify "revolution" with incidental things like demonstrations, barricades, slogans and posters.

But none of these things, individually or taken together – no matter how important each may be – is revolution as such. We can have all these things and still, if we lack a proper understanding of the true nature of the crisis of this system, in effect be attempting to create a new society by weaving a revolution from strips of bamboo.

Mass and Scale.[1] Many on the establishment Left – not to mention centrist liberals – have criticized horizontalist movements like Occupy for lacking conventional signifiers of legitimacy like leaders and official demands. And on a more fundamental level, the very model of networked organization itself came under attack.

Decentralized networks are useless, Evgeny Morozov says, because they lack the mass and scale for taking over existing institutions.

> Without well-organized, centralized, and hierarchical structures to push back against entrenched interests, attempts to make politics more participatory might stall, and further disempower the weak, and coopt members of the opposition into weak and toothless political settings. This was the case before the Internet, and, most likely, it will be the case long after.[2]

And Malcolm Gladwell considers them pernicious not only because of the lack of mass and centralized coordination but because, unlike activist movements like the legacy Civil Rights movement, they involve only "weak ties." Weak ties "seldom lead to high-risk activism": "Social networks are effective at increasing *participation* – by lessening the level of motivation that participation requires."

> The civil-rights movement was high-risk activism. It was also, crucially, strategic activism: a challenge to the establishment mounted with precision and discipline. The N.A.A.C.P. was a centralized organization, run from New York according to highly formalized operating procedures. At the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Martin Luther King, Jr., was the unquestioned authority....

> This is the second crucial distinction between traditional activism and its online variant: social media are not about this kind of hierarchical organization. Facebook and the like are tools for building *networks*, which are the opposite, in structure and character, of hierarchies. Unlike hierarchies, with their rules and procedures, networks aren't controlled by a single central authority. Decisions are made through consensus, and the ties that bind people to the group are loose.[3]

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1 I'm indebted for this terminology to William Gillis's analysis in "Organization Versus Getting Shit Done," *Human Iterations*, Jan. 31, 2012 <http://humaniterations.net/2012/01/31/organizations-versus-getting-shit-done/>.
2 Evgeny Morozov, "Why Social Movements Should Ignore Social Media," *The New Republic*, February 5, 2013 (where else?), <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/112189/social-media-doesnt-always-help-social-movements>.
3 Malcolm Gladwell, "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not be Tweeted," *The New Yorker*, October 4, 2010 <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-3>.

A certain kind of verticalist is as fond of pulling out Jo Freeman's "The Tyranny of Structurelessness,"[4] as a certain kind of right-libertarian is of pulling out Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons." Although Freeman's essay is commonly drawn on today as a critique of consensus process, David Graeber argues that consensus process was in fact developed *in response to* the problems she described (i.e. informal cliques emerging, controlling information and setting agendas, as feminist groups grew to over twenty people or so).

> ...almost everyone who is not emerging from an explicitly anti-authoritarian position... completely misread Freeman's essay, and interpret it not as a plea for formal mechanisms to ensure equality, but as a plea for more transparent hierarchy. Leninists are notorious for this sort of thing, but Liberals are just as bad.... First, Freeman's argument about the formation of cliques and invisible power structures is taken as an argument that any group of over twenty people will always have to have cliques, power structures, and people in authority. The next step is to insist that if you want to minimize the power of such cliques, or any deleterious effects those power structures might have, the only way to do so is to institutionalize them: to take the de facto cabal and turn them into a central committee.... One needs to get power out of the shadows—to formalize the process, make up rules, hold elections, specify exactly what the cabal is allowed to do and what it is not. In this way, at least, power will be made transparent and "accountable."....
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> From a practical, activist perspective, this prescription is obviously ridiculous. It is far easier to limit the degree to which informal cliques can wield effective power by granting them no formal status at all, and therefore no legitimacy; whatever "formal accountability structures" it is imagined will contain the cliques-now-turned-committees can only be far less effective in this regard, not least because they end up legitimating and hence massively increasing the differential access to information which allows some in otherwise egalitarian groups to have greater power to begin with.... [S]tructures of transparently inevitably... begin to become structures of stupidity as soon as that takes place.[5]

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4 Jo Freeman, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" (1971) <http://jofreeman.com/tyranny.htm>.
5 David Graeber,*The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* (Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2015), pp. 202-203.

An Alternative Approach

Criticisms like the above come essentially from a mass-production industrial age paradigm, and operate on its assumptions. Morozov is wrong to evaluate networked organizations in terms of their effectiveness in taking over the state and other hierarchical institutions.

The emphasis on mass, hierarchy and central coordination to which the traditional establishment Left is so attached is very much an industrial age paradigm. And the model of activism it lionizes – centered on large-scale concentrations of bodies in space, with slogans and posters, coordinated by central organizations – amounts, as we just noted, to a cargo cult.

There has been a tendency in much of the Left – especially the Old Left – to equate size, capital accumulation and overhead with productivity, to view the gigantism fostered by capitalism as "progressive," and to equate "Revolution" to putting capitalism's hierarchical institutions under new management. Even Antonio Gramsci, for all his talk of a "war of position" in civil society at large rather than a "war of maneuver" (a direct assault on the state), only put off the necessary final conquest of the commanding heights institutions until the cultural sappers had done their job.

This mission of revolutionary conquest, or reformist capture, of the institutions of the old society presupposed countervailing institutions of equal mass. The Old Left model of revolution, and its survivals in the verticalist/establishment Left to the present day, are direct analogues of the mass production industrial model of Schumpeter, Galbraith and Chandler.

If there was ever any validity to this model – which I consider highly doubtful – it ended with the mass production age. We no longer need to storm the ramparts of those old state and industrial hierarchies because they no longer perform any socially necessary function. Ephemeral production technologies and distributed, stigmergic coordination mechanisms have made it possible to build a society entirely outside the old institutional framework, and leave the old institutions to crumble.

And Gladwell's "weak ties" criticisms are equally wrong-headed. The whole point of networked organization is its granularity: They enable the leveraging of even very small contributions that previously would have been made uneconomical by the high transaction costs of coordination.

Wikipedia, unlike Britannica, can leverage millions of contributions as small as an added paragraph or clause, or change in punctuation in an existing article, without first having to amass the capital to create an entire encyclopedia. As Molly Sauter argues in *The Coming Swarm*, the traditional model that Gladwell lionizes

> casts as a failure the fact that the simpler modes of digitally based activism allow more people to engage. As the cost of entry-level engagement goes down, more people will engage. Some of those people will continue to stay involved with activist causes and scale the ladder of engagement to more advanced and involved forms of activism. Others won't. But there must be a bottom rung to step on....[6]

Criticisms based on an idealized liberal version of history "ultimately chill innovation in political movements."[7] There's a close parallel with the way regulatory entry barriers lock in high-overhead, capital-intensive technologies used by privileged incumbent corporations, and lock out competition from smaller upstart firms using new democratic technologies that otherwise would permit them to enter the market without large capital outlays or a large revenue stream to service overhead. Similarly, the "approved" forms of activism promoted by legacy activist institutions, their professionalized leadership and celebrity allies tend to privilege the forms of protest that are most feasible for the middle class, thus creating entry barriers against the "weapons of the weak" and more asymmetric modes of opposition by ordinary people. "...[I]t encourages the expression of dissent only by those individuals willing to risk everything for the sake of a political point"[8] – or by those who can afford to do so.

Criticisms like Gladwell's remind me of aging geeks who lament that "in my day, we had to learn command-line interface."

The Alleged "Failure" of Occupy. The very expression "failure of Occupy" ignores the fact that networked struggles like Seattle, the Arab Spring and Occupy tend to reproduce themselves from one geographical location to another. Note that the following extended passage was written after the Seattle movement, but before the Arab Spring:

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6 Molly Sauter, *The Coming Swarm: DDOS Actions, Hacktivism and Civil Disobedience* (Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 6.

7 *Ibid.* p. 19.

8 *Ibid.* p. 90.

Traditionally... the geographical expansion of movements takes the form of an *international cycle of struggles* in which revolts spread from one local context to another like a contagious disease through the communication of common practices and desires....

A new international cycle finally emerged around the issues of globalization in the late 1990s. The coming-out party of the new cycle of struggles were the protests at the WTO summit in Seattle in 1999.... Suddenly the riots against IMF austerity programs in one country, protests against a World Bank project in another, and demonstrations against NAFTA in a third were all revealed to be elements of a common cycle of struggles... We should emphasize, once again, that what the forces mobilized in this new global cycle have is not just a common enemy – whether it be called neoliberalism, U.S. hegemony, or global Empire – but also common practices, languages, conduct, habits, forms of life, and desires for a better future. The cycle, in other words, is not only reactive but also active and creative....

The global mobilization of the common in this new cycle of struggle does not negate or even overshadow the local nature or singularity of each struggle. The communication with other struggles, in fact, reinforces the power and augments the wealth of each single one. Consider, for example, the revolt that broke out in Argentina on the nineteenth and twentieth of December 2001 in the midst of economic crisis and has continued in different forms, with successes and failures, ever since.... The response of the Argentine population was immediate and creative: industrial workers refused to let their factories close and took over managing the factories themselves, networks of neighborhood and city assemblies were formed to manage political debates and decisions, new forms of money were invented to allow for autonomous exchange, and the *piqueteros*, the movements of employed..., experimented with new forms of protest in their conflicts with police and other authorities. All of this is clearly specific to the national situation, but it is also... common to all those who suffer and struggle against the exploitation and hierarchy of the global system. The revolt of Argentina was born with the common heritage of the global cycle of struggle at its back....

The global cycle of struggles develops in the form of distributed network. Each local struggle functions as a node that communicates

with all the other nodes without any hub or center of intelligence. Each struggle remains singular and tied to its local conditions but at the same time is immersed in the common web. This form of organization is the most fully realized example we have of the multitude.[9]

Graeber considers the various networked movements of the nineties and 2000s as a continuing "revolution" or "Fourth World War":

In recent years we have seen a kind of continual series of tiny '68s. The uprisings against state socialism that began in Tiananmen Square and culminated in the collapse of the Soviet Union began that way, though they were quickly diverted into the culmination of that capitalist recuperation of the spirit of '60s rebellion that has come to be known as "neoliberalism." After the Zapatista world revolution – they called it the Fourth World War – began in '94, such mini-'68s began happening so thick and fast the process almost seemed to have become institutionalized: Seattle, Genoa, Cancun, Quebec, Hong Kong … And insofar as it was indeed institutionalized, by global networks the Zapatistas had helped set up, it was on the basis of a kind of small-a anarchism based on principles of decentralized direct democracy and direct action. The prospect of facing a genuine global democratic movement seems to have so frightened the US authorities, in particular, that they went into veritable panic mode. There is of course a traditional antidote to the threat of mass mobilization from below. You start a war…. Ten years later, the resulting paroxysm of imperial overstretch appears to have undermined the very basis of the American Empire. What we are now witnessing is the process of that empire's collapse.[10]

Immanuel Wallerstein also sees Occupy as part of a long-term revolutionary cycle. He calls the 1994 EZLN uprising "the beginning of the counteroffensive of the world left against the relatively short-lived successes of the world right between the 1970s and 1994…. What the Zapatistas did was to remind them (and the world left) that there was indeed an alternative…." The uprising "paved the way to the successful protests at Seattle in 1999 and then elsewhere, as well as the founding of the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre in 2001."[11]

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9 Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Multitude: War and Democracy in an Age of Empire* (Penguin, 2004), pp. 213-217.

10 David Graeber, "Situating Occupy Lessons From the Revolutionary Past," InterActivist Info Exchange, December 4, 2011 <http://interactivist.autonomedia.org/node/36685>.

11 Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Neo-Zapatistas: Twenty Years After," *Immanuel Wallerstein*, May 1, 2014 <http://www.iwallerstein.com/neozapatistas-twenty-years/>.

So rather than asking "What happened to Occupy?" or "What happened to M15?" as though they were discrete entities with a beginning and an end, it makes more sense to think of the whole trajectory of movements including the Arab Spring, M15 and Syntagma, Madison, Occupy, Quebec, the N14 General Strike, and so on, as one loose global network of associated networked movements. This loose, networked movement is always throwing up new avatars, with new names, which appear to decline after a while. But when something new arises – and it always does, whether in the same country or halfway around the world – it's built on the same infrastructure and foundations, and the same social capital, as its predecessors. And the process represents a spiral rather than a mere cycle, with each iteration transcending the previous one. Here's how Nathan Schneider described the phenomenon in an interview:

What did Occupy Wall Street succeed at? What did it fail at?

It very powerfully succeeded at introducing activists from around the country to one another and turned a lot of people into activists that weren't before. *It produced a tremendous number of networks, both online and offline*, which continue to mobilize people on a number of fronts, though few are still called Occupy....

What innovation in this area do you think is in store for us in the future? What should we be getting excited about?

...This is a movement that has an endless number of clever ideas appearing all the time, but it's never clear which ones are going to rise above the rest until it happens. The next big idea might very well not be called "Occupy", which may be a good thing – but the chances are high that, even so, it will be the result of networks that were forged during the Occupy movement.[12]

John Holloway dismisses concerns about the institutional continuity or persistence of any particular movement.

Before we can break with capital altogether, you suggest we begin by 'cracking' it in different places and times. Yet these 'cracks', as you call them, seem to flourish particularly in times of crisis. We saw this

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12 Joel Dietz, ""Occupy Wall Street turned movements into international networks that didn't exist before," *OuiShare*, January 7, 2013 <http://ouishare.net/2013/01/nathan-schneider-occupy-wall-street/>.

in the popular uprising in Argentina in 2001-'02, as Marina Sitrin powerfully portrayed in her book Everyday Revolutions*, and we're seeing it in Southern Europe today. Do you think there is a way to perpetuate such cracks beyond these economic 'hard times'? Or is this type of autonomous popular self-organization bound to be something that flourishes in times of crisis and then secedes back into this kind of Kirchnerismo-style state capitalist populism?*

I don't know, first I don't think times necessarily get better and secondly I'm not sure that we should worry too much about perpetuation. If you look at Argentina, there was clearly a sense that things did get better. Like the economy, rates of profit recovered, in which a lot of the movements of 2001 and 2002 became sucked in into the state. But the problems have obviously reappeared somewhere else. If you look at Spain and Greece, firstly there are no short-term perspectives of things getting substantially better. Secondly, if they did get better, then the crisis would move on somewhere else. And the search for alternative ways of living moves on.

I think there is an accumulation of experience, and also an accumulation of growing awareness that spreads from one country to another, that capitalism just isn't working and that it is in serious problems. I think that people in Greece look to Argentina and recognize the importance of the experiences of 10 years ago. And I think that people in Argentina – even if things have improved economically for them – look to Greece and see the instability of capitalism. The failure of capitalism is showing up again in another place. I think there is a growing sense throughout the world that capitalism isn't working. There is a growing confidence perhaps that the cracks we create or the crazinesses we create may really be the basis for a new world and a new society, and may really be the only way forward.

What I don't like about the idea of perpetuation is that it has to be a smooth upward progress. I don't think it works like that. I think it's more like a social flow of rebellion, something that moves throughout the world, with eruptions in one place and then in another place. But there are continuities below the discontinuities. We have to think in terms of disrupting bubbling movements rather than thinking that it

all depends on whether we can perpetuate the movement in one place. If we think in terms of perpetuation in one place, I think at times it can lead us into either an institutionalization, which I think is not much help, or it can lead us into a sense of defeat, perhaps, which I don't think is right.[13]

The various iterations of this networked movement since the Arab Spring have consciously viewed themselves, increasingly, as manifestations of a single global movement. Bernardo Gutierrez argues that

all revolts are connected somehow. The fact that a Brazilian flag was flying in Istanbul's Taksim Square, or that the slogan "Brazil will be another Turkey" was used during Brazil's demonstrations, are examples. The Interagentes study [Es] of digital networks mentioned that when the first protests were called in Sao Paulo on June 6, there were two Turkish Facebook pages among the ten most influential in Brazil on that day: Diren Gezi Parki and Turkiyenin Gururu Recep Tayyip Erdogan.[14]

The most important thing to remember, as Graeber points out, is that "once people's political horizons have been broadened, the change is permanent.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans (and not only Americans, of course, but Greeks, Spaniards, and Tunisians) now have direct experience of self-organization, collective action, and human solidarity. This makes it almost impossible to go back to   one's previous life and see things the same way. While the world's financial and political elites skate blindly toward the next 2008-scale crisis, we're continuing to carry out occupations of buildings, farms, foreclosed homes, and workplaces—temporary or permanent— organizing rent strikes, seminars, and debtors' assemblies, and in doing so, laying the groundwork for a genuinely democratic culture, and introducing the skills, habits, and experience that would make an entirely new conception of politics come to life.[15]

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13 Jerome Roos, "Talking About a Revolution With John Holloway," *John Holloway*, April 13, 2013 <http://www.johnholloway.com.mx/2013/05/01/talking-about-a-revolution-with-john-holloway/>.

14 Bernardo Gutierrez, "What do Brazil, Turkey, Peru and Bulgaria have in common?" *Al Jazeera*, September 7, 2013 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/09/20139572247949239.html>.

15 Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, xix-xx.

The Real Failure of Verticalism. The real irony of those who attribute the alleged "failure" of Occupy to its horizontalism is that the adoption of a horizontalist approach was in fact a reaction to the very real, massive failure of verticalism itself. Occupy, with its leaderless, prefigurative approach, was attractive to millions of Millennials precisely because their hopes for change within the system had been so decisively dashed.

One reason for the totally unexpected success of the Occupy movement, Graeber suspects, is the collapse of so many people's hopes for change through the political system:

> But in a way, this feeling of personal betrayal is pretty much inevitable. It is the only way of preserving the faith that it's possible for progressive policies to be enacted in the US through electoral means. Because if Obama was not planning all along to betray his Progressive base, then one would be forced to conclude any such project is impossible. After all, how could there have been a more perfect alignment of the stars than happened in 2008? That year saw a wave election that left Democrats in control of both houses of congress, a Democratic president elected on a platform of "Change" coming to power at a moment of economic crisis so profound that radical measures of some sort were unavoidable, and at a time when popular rage against the nation's financial elites was so intense that most Americans would have supported almost anything. If it was not possible to enact any real progressive policies or legislation at such a moment, clearly, it would never be. Yet none were enacted.... Clearly, if progressive change was not possible through electoral means in 2008, it simply isn't going to possible at all. And that is exactly what very large numbers of Americans appear to have concluded.[16]

One of the most disillusioned demographics, perhaps not coincidentally, was also the central demographic in the Occupy movement: the Millennials who had voted for Obama in droves in 2008. These people felt betrayed not only by a president who ran on "Si se puede!" and governed as a moderate Republican. They were college graduates unemployed high into the double digits, working unpaid internships, living in their parents' houses again – basically an analog of the Japanese "lost generation" who had discovered that all the propaganda promises about working hard, getting an education and the rest of it were lies and betrayals.

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16 *Ibid.*

> So in civic affairs as in economic ones, a generation of young people had every reason to feel they'd done exactly what they were supposed to do according to the rulebook – and got worse than nothing. What Obama had robbed them of was precisely the thing he so famously promised: Hope – hope of any meaningful change via institutional means in their lifetimes. If they wanted to see their actual problems addressed, if they wanted to see any sort of democratic transformation of America, it was going to have to be through other means.[17]

A large share of those participating in OWS have learned that playing by the normal rules of "progressive" politics – getting out the vote and organizing pressure groups – doesn't work. They tried that in 2008, electing the most "progressive" president in two generations with the biggest Democratic majority since LBJ, and a Democratic super-majority in Congress. And then they were betrayed as Obama revealed himself to be either totally ineffectual or, worse yet, a conscious stooge of Wall Street.

The networked resistance movement's lack of interest in seizing state power reflects a realistic assessment of the results of conventional revolutionary strategy, and a preference for prefigurative politics.

> The traditional aim of revolutionary movements to take over the state is not a solution but part of the problem, as the state "concentrates power in the hands of the few at the apex of its hierarchy, and defends the system that benefits a ruling class of capitalists, landlords, and state managers. It cannot be used for revolution, since it only creates ruling elites…"[18]

And as Graeber also points out in *The Democracy Experiment*, an official agenda and list of demands was precisely what the first verticalist feelers for organizing Occupy had in mind, before he and his horizontalist comrades redirected the movement. Until it actually got underway, Occupy Wall Street showed every sign of being simply another top-down protest. In

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17 Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, p. 98.
18 Jerome Roos, "We Are Everywhere! The Autonomous Roots of the Real Democracy Movement," Paper delivered at 7th annual ECPR general conference: 'Comparative Perspectives on the New Politics of Dissent' Democracy of the Squares: Visions and Practices of Democracy from Egypt to the US Sciences Po Bordeaux, September 4-7, 2013, p. 9. The quote is from Lucien Van der Walt and M. Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009).

fact, once the initial call to action had been issued by *Adbusters* on July 13, 2011, it came very close to being co-opted by traditional verticalist organizations like New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts and – worse yet – the Workers' World Party, the organization behind the International A.N.S.W.E.R. coalition that dominated the earlier movement against the Iraq War.[19] [20]

> When Graeber and his friends showed up on Aug. 2, they found out that the event wasn't, in fact, a general assembly, but a traditional rally, to be followed by a short meeting and a march to Wall Street to deliver a set of predetermined demands ("A massive public-private jobs program" was one, "An end to oppression and war!" was another). In anarchist argot, the event was being run by "verticals" – top-down organizations – rather than "horizontals" such as Graeber and his friends. Sagri and Graeber felt they'd been had, and they were angry.[21]

As Graeber recalled, the movement as it had evolved to that point gave every indication of being a conventional protest that would fizzle out with little notice.

> …[A] local anti-budget cut coalition top-heavy with NGOs, unions, and socialist groups had tried to take possession of the process and called for a "General Assembly" at Bowling Green. The title proved extremely misleading. When I arrived, I found the event had been effectively taken over by a veteran protest group called the Worker's World Party, most famous for having patched together ANSWER, one of the two great anti-war coalitions, back in 2003. They had already set up their banners, megaphones, and were making speeches – after which, someone explained, they were planning on leading the 80-odd assembled people in a march past the Stock Exchange itself.[22]

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19 The WWP was "almost a caricature" of Old Left Stalinist authoritarianism, according to David Graeber. It continues to justify the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Chinese suppression of the Tienanmen protestors in 1989. The millions of people who participate in WWP-organized protests like the ANSWER anti-war protests have little idea that all the decisions are made by a handful of mostly white party cadres, hiding behind black and Latino front men. Graeber, *The Democracy Project: A History, A Crisis, A Movement* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2013), p. 25.

20 "#Occupy Wall Street: A Shift in Revolutionary Tactics," *Adbusters blog*, July 13, 2011 <http://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>.

21 Drake Bennet, "David Graeber, the Anti-Leader of Occupy Wall Street, *BusinessWeek*, October 26, 2011 <http://www.businessweek.com/printer/magazine/david-graeber-the-antileader-of-occupy-wall-street-10262011.html>.

22 David Graeber, "On Playing By The Rules—The Strange Success of OccupyWallStreet," Countercurrents.org, October 23, 2011 <http://www.countercurrents.org/graeber241011l.htm>.

But Graeber, noticing that most of the people who showed up weren't all that happy with the professional activists' self-appointed leadership ("the sort of people who actually like marching around with pre-issued signs and listening to spokesmen from somebody's central committee"[23]), wound up playing a role comparable to triggering the crystallization of a supersaturated solution around a random particle. The demonstration that was set up to be just another cookie-cutter effort of the institutional Left – "the old fashioned vertical politics of top-down coalitions, charismatic leaders, and marching around with signs" – instead emerged as a leaderless, horizontal movement.

> So we gathered up a few obvious horizontals and formed a circle, and tried to get everyone else to join us…. We created a decision-making process (we would operate by modified consensus) broke out into working groups (outreach, action, facilitation) and then reassembled to allow each group to report its collective decisions, and set up times for new meetings of both the smaller and larger groups. It was difficult to figure out what to do since we only had six weeks, not nearly enough time to plan a major action, let alone bus in the thousands of people that would be required to actually shut down Wall Street – and anyway we couldn't shut down Wall Street on the appointed day, since September 17, the day Adbusters had been advertising, was a Saturday. We also had no money of any kind.

> Two days later, at the Outreach meeting we were brainstorming what to put on our first flyer. Adbusters' idea had been that we focus on "one key demand." This was a brilliant idea from a marketing perspective, but from an organizing perspective, it made no sense at all. We put that one aside almost immediately. There were much more fundamental questions to be hashed out. Like: who were we? Who did want to appeal to? Who did we represent? Someone – this time I remember quite clearly it was me, but I wouldn't be surprised if a half dozen others had equally strong memories of being the first to come up with it – suggested, "well, why not call ourselves 'the 99%'? If 1% of the population have ended up with all the benefits of the last 10 years of economic growth, control the wealth, own the politicians… why not just say we're everybody else?" The Spanish couple quickly began to lay out a "We Are the 99%" pamphlet, and we started brainstorming ways to print and distribute it for free.

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23 Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, p. 27.

Over the next few weeks a plan began to take shape…. We quickly decided that what we really wanted to do was something like had already been accomplished in Athens, Barcelona, or Madrid: occupy a public space to create a New York General Assembly, a body that could act as a model of genuine, direct democracy to contrapose to the corrupt charade presented to us as "democracy" by the US government. The Wall Street action would be a stepping-stone. Still, it was almost impossible to predict what would really happen on the 17th. There were supposed to be 90,000 people following us on the internet. Adbusters had called for 20,000 to fill the streets. That obviously wasn't going to happen. But how many would really show up? What's more, we were keenly aware that the NYPD numbered close to 40,000; Wall Street was, in fact, probably the single most heavily policed public space on the face of Planet Earth. To be perfectly honest, as one of the old-timers scrambling to organize medical and legal trainings, lessons on how to organize affinity groups and do non-violent civil disobedience, seminars on how to facilitate meetings and the like, for most of us, the greatest concern during those hectic weeks was how to ensure the initial event wouldn't turn out a total fiasco, with all the enthusiastic young people immediately beaten, arrested, and psychologically traumatized as the media, as usual, simply looked the other way.

We'd certainly seen it happen before.

This time it didn't…. On September 17th itself, I was troubled at first by the fact that only a few hundred people seemed to have shown up. What's more the spot we'd chosen for our General Assembly, a plaza outside Citibank, had been shut down by the city and surrounded by high fences. The tactical committee however had scouted out other possible locations, and distributed maps: around 3 PM, word went around we were moving to location #5 – Zuccotti Park – and by the time we got there, I realized we were surrounded by at least two thousand people.

The real credit for what happened after that – within a matter of weeks, a movement that had spread to 800 different cities, with outpourings of support from radical opposition groups as far away as China – belongs mainly to the students and other young people who simply dug themselves and refused to leave, despite the endless (and in many cases, obviously illegal) acts of police repression designed to intimidate….[24]

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24 Graeber, "On Playing By the Rules."

Prefigurative Politics. The networked, horizontal resistance movements of the last two decades differ from the revolutionary movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries, among other ways, in that the methods of struggle are becoming more and more prefigurative. Marina Sitrin defines prefigurative movements as those

> that are creating the future in their present social relationships. Unlike past movements, social change isn't deferred to a later date by demanding reform from the state, or by taking state power and eventually, instituting these reforms.... [T]heir strategy for the creation of a new society is not grounded in either state dependency or the taking of power to create another state. Their intention is, to borrow John Holloway's phrase, to change the world without taking power.[25]

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in *Multitude*, explain that the purpose of today's movements is not to the conquest of power but exodus from it: "resistance, exodus, the emptying out of the enemy's power, and the multitude's construction of a new society...."[26] They compare old-line models of insurrection based on mass and organization, aimed at seizing state power, to Fordist industrial production. The guerrilla movements after 1968, and even more so the movements of recent years, are "post-Fordist," based on "information systems and network structures." Rather than a hierarchical party, the new resistance movements have "adopted the characteristics of biopolitical production and spread throughout the entire fabric of society.... It was not just a matter of 'winning hearts and minds,' ...but rather of creating new hearts and minds through the construction of new circuits of communication, new forms of social collaboration, and new modes of interaction." The most important change is "*in the relationship between the organization of the movements and the organization of economic and social production.*"

> The networks of information, communication, and cooperation – the primary axes of post-Fordist production – begin to define the new guerrilla movements. Not only do the movements employ technologies such as the Internet as organizing tools, they also begin to adapt these technologies as models for their own organizational structures.[27]

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25 Marina Sitrin, *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006), p. 4.

26 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 68-69.

27 *Ibid.* pp. 81-82.

The central difference between "post-Fordist" resistance movements and classical guerrilla movements is that the latter were eventually supposed to concentrate their forces and attack the major political and economic targets in force in order to supplant the class forces previously in control of them.

> Network organization, by contrast, is based on the *continuing* plurality of its elements and its networks of communication in such a way that reduction to a centralized and unified command structure is impossible. The polycentric form of the guerrilla model thus evolves into a network form in which there is no center, only an irreducible plurality of nodes in communication with each other.[28]

One transitional movement toward networked forms of guerrilla conflict was the Palestinian Intifada, which was a composite of two models:

> On one hand, the revolt is organized internally by poor young men on a very local level round neighborhood leaders and popular committees…. On the other hand, the revolt is organized externally by the various established Palestinian political organizations, most of which were in exile at the beginning of the first Intifada and controlled by men of an older generation. Throughout its different phases, the Intifada seems to have been defined by different proportions of these two organizational forms, one internal and the other external, one horizontal, autonomous, and distributed and the other vertical and centralized. The Intifada is thus an ambivalent organization that points backward toward older centralized forms and forward to new distributed forms of organization.[29]

The EZLN (the Zapatista National Liberation Army) was perhaps the first movement with both feet – or at least one and a half – firmly planted in the networked world.

> The Zapatistas, which were born and primarily remain a peasant and indigenous movement, use the Internet and communications technologies not only as a means of distributing their communiques to the outside world but also… as a structural element inside their organization…. Communication is central to the Zapatistas' notion of revolution, and they continually emphasize the need to create horizontal network organizations rather than vertical centralized structures.

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28 *Ibid.* pp. 82-83.
29 *Ibid.* pp. 83-84.

Despite some hat tipping to the old guerrilla army model in their nomenclature, "their goal has never been to defeat the state and claim sovereign authority but rather to change the world without taking power."[30]

To the extent that the EZLN has carried out governance functions in liberated portions of Chiapas, it has done so in a prefigurative manner, including – much like the Black Panthers in Oakland – a robust program of counter-institution building (including "their own autonomous government, complete with their own health and education system, based in the indigenous traditions of their ancestors"), and successfully recuperated thousands of acres of land on which they have constructed communities that are governed "from the bottom up."[31]

Sitrin, in the Introduction to her book of the same name, refers to *horizontalidad* as a word coined to reflect the principles of the new social movements in Argentina during the 2002 crisis, "a break with vertical ways of organizing and relating" based on "democratic communication on a level plane." Movements based on "horizontalism" are

> prefigurative revolutionary movements; movements, that create the future in the present. These new movements are not creating party platforms or programs. They do not look to one leader, but make space for all to be leaders. They place more importance on asking the right questions than on providing the correct answers. They do not adhere to dogma and hierarchy, instead they build direct democracy and consensus....
>
> The autonomous social movements in Argentina are one part of this global phenomenon. Within Argentina, they are also a "movement of movements." They are working class people taking over factories and running them collectively. They are the urban middle class, many recently declassed, working to meet their needs in solidarity with those around them. They are the unemployed, like so many unemployed around the globe, facing the prospect of never finding regular work, yet collectively finding ways to survive and become self-sufficient, using mutual-aid and love. They are autonomous indigenous communities struggling to liberate stolen land.

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30 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 85.

31 Andalusia Knoll and Itandehui Reyes, "From Fire to Autonomy: Zapatistas, 20 Years of Walking Slowly," *Truthout*, January 25, 2014 <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/21427-from-fire-to-autonomy-zapatistas-20-years-of-walking-slowly>.

In Argentina, these active movements are now communicating, assisting, and learning from one another, and thus constructing new types of networks that reject the hierarchical template bequeathed to them by established politics. A core part of this rejection includes a break with the idea of "power-over." People are attempting, instead, to organize on a flatter plane, with the goal of creating "power-with" one another.[32]

And like many of the prefigurative movements that came after it (notably the alternative economy experiments arising out of Syntagma in Greece), Argentine horizontalism included lots of grass-roots projects in building a counter-economy to support some degree of secession and pursuit of livelihoods independent of the capitalist economy. "Projects range from bakeries and organic gardens, to alternative medicine clinics, education and schools, to raising animals and taking over land for housing and food production. Many of the hundreds of recuperated factories and other workplaces formed horizontal linkages to barter their respective outputs with one another (for example, a cooperative clinic providing free healthcare to printing factory workers in return for free printing of all their material).[33]

Returning to Hardt and Negri's comments in *Multitude*, the multitude's networked struggle, like post-Fordist production,

> does not rely on discipline in the same way [as conventional military organizations]: creativity, communication, and self-organized cooperation are its primary values. This new kind of force, of course, resists and attacks the enemy as military forces always have, but increasingly its focus is internal—producing new subjectivities and new expansive forms of life within the organization itself. No longer is "the people" assumed as basis and *no longer is taking power of the sovereign state structure the goal*. The democratic elements of the guerrilla structure are pushed further in the networked form, and *the organization becomes less a means and more an end in itself* [emphasis added].[34]

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32 Sitrin, *Horizontalism*, pp. 2-3.
33 *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 15.
34 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 83

To clarify, in modern networked organizations – perhaps better called networked *counter-societies* – the attacks and resistance against the enemy are primarily aimed at defending the internal space for self-organization against attempts at suppression.

To repeat, the horizontalism of the network resistance movement prefigures the horizontalism by which the successor society will be organized. The real significance of Occupy is not as a political movement or a pressure group, but as a school or a fair. Graeber, in an interview with Ezra Klein, referred to it as an example of prefigurative politics:

> DG: It's very similar to the globalization movement. You see the same criticisms in the press. It's a bunch of kids who don't know economics and only know what they're against. But there's a reason for that. it's pre-figurative, so to speak. You're creating a vision of the sort of society you want to have in miniature. And it's a way of juxtaposing yourself against these powerful, undemocratic forces you're protesting. If you make demands, you're saying, in a way, that you're asking the people in power and the existing institutions to do something different. And one reason people have been hesitant to do that is they see these institutions as the problem.
>
> EK: So if you say, for instance, that you want a tax on Wall Street and then you'll be happy, you're implicitly saying that you're willing to be happy with a slightly modified version of the current system.
>
> DG: Right. The tax on Wall Street will go to people controlled by Wall Street.
>
> EK: By which you mean government.
>
> DG: Yes. So we are keeping it open-ended. In a way, what we want is to create spaces where people can think about questions like that.... So we're trying to reframe things away from the rhetoric of demands to questions of visions and solutions. Now how that translates into actual social change is an interesting question. One way this has been done elsewhere is you have local initiatives that come out of the local assemblies.[35]

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35 Ezra Klein, "You're creating a vision of the sort of society you want to have in miniature," *The Washington Post*, October 3, 2011 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/youre-creating-a-vision-of-the-sort-of-society-you-want-to-have-in-miniature/2011/08/25/gIQAXVg7HL_blog.html>.

Graeber also spoke favorably of the "Buenos Aires strategy" from the Argentine meltdown as a model for Occupy:

> Essentially, the strategy is to create alternative institutions, based on horizontal principles, that have nothing to do with the government, and declare the entire political system to be absolutely corrupt.... Hence after the popular economic collapse in Argentina in 2001, a popular uprising that ousted three different governments in a matter of months settled into a strategy of creating alternative institutions based on the strategy of creating alternative institutions based on the principles of what they themselves called "horizontality"; popular assemblies to govern urban neighborhoods, recuperated factories and other workplaces..., self-organized unemployed associations..., even, for a while, an alternative currency system.[36]

John Holloway argued, in similar terms, that Occupy shouldn't be concerned with influencing state policy or taking control of the present system – which is becoming increasingly impossible – but with seceding from the system and telling capital to go to hell.

> If you think of Greece in 2011 and the extraordinary demonstrations there, in which so many buildings in the center were burned down – the state just carries on regardless.... So perhaps we can hope that non-state oriented politics will become more and more common and more widespread throughout society....

> *As a refusal?*

> Yes, as a refusal. As a kind of total breakdown of the old way of doing things, which might bring a few little benefits but really it didn't take anybody very far. And I think that more and more people are being forced to reinvent their politics or reinvent their ideas about politics, both in terms of protests -- but also I think in terms of creating alternatives. If the system has no room for us..., if the state absolutely refuses to negotiate, if the police become more repressive, then I think we are forced not only to think of creative forms of protest but also ways of how we actually survive and how we actually create alternative ways of living. And we see that very much in Spain and in Greece, where things are going in that direction. But I think what the

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36 Graeber, *The Democracy Project*, p. 267.

crisis is also telling us is that *that*'s the way to go, but that we haven't gone far enough yet. We're not yet in a situation where we can just tell capital to go to hell and survive without it. That's really the problem. But I think that's the direction we have to go in.[37]

Tiberius Brastaviceanu of the Multitude Project describes the Occupy camps as "embryos of the new world":

> The Occupation camps across the world are not just protest sites. They are not just new political spaces. They are in fact embryos of the emergent new world.
>
> *They are emergent cities*
>
> If you go to the nearest camp you'll find in there everything you'd need to survive, even during a Canadian winter. For example, only two days after its initiation the Montreal camp had already a health center, a kitchen that fed easily over 500 people the very first evening, a center of communication and coordination, an information and donation center, a political space (where the assemblies take place), a cultural space (where people play drums, dance, paint...), and obviously a housing space. Believe it or not, we even have the protection of the militia (the Quebecois patriots), who put their tent across the street from the main camp, having great visibility over the area.
>
> During the first hours of the encampment I joined the kitchen and I experienced first-hand how a very complex food processing system self-organized in no time. The other centers were also keeping the pace. It was cold and very windy. While the kitchen was continuously serving all kinds of snacks, beverages, fresh fruits and vegetables, while we were reinforcing the tent to withstand the strong wind, transporting water from a nearby hotel, processing garbage, washing dishes, by 5:30pm we were ready to receive the hungry wave of protesters with hot meals. They formed a huge line and in an orderly fashion they came, one-by-one, with a big smile on their tired faces to get their bowl of rice with spicy potato curry and coconut milk, and baked pumpkin. And soon it was dark. Flashlights just appeared from

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37 Jerome Roos, "Talking About a Revolution With John Holloway," *John Holloway*, April 13, 2013 <http://www.johnholloway.com.mx/2013/05/01/talking-about-a-revolution-with-john-holloway/>.

nowhere, and by the end of the night the entire kitchen was illuminated by construction lights connected to a large power supply. The kitchen stayed open around the clock, and still operates 24 hours per day. ... Did I mention that there was no boss?

Yesterday I passed by the camp and I was again surprised by how fast the infrastructure of this emergent city was growing. Toilets are coming, a large power generator was already there waiting to be connected, the WiFi infrastructure was only waiting for power, the kitchen had a very large tank of water, gas burners, a BBQ and a new large shelf for storage (food is never a problem). Let me tell you something, the occupiers are getting ready for the winter! But again, this new city within the city has no mayor. Its governance is decentralized, distributed.

They are embryos of the new world

The camps are incubators for new systems of governance..., for open and decentralized economical systems with alternative channels of value exchange (currencies), for a new culture, for new education systems... These new institutions are taking shape in these spaces and are now starting to diffuse throughout society. It is a global phenomenon. The world is going through a profound metamorphosis process.

Yes,... some people may think that we can't apply this to the entire society. They are dead wrong. The new technology enables the scaling of these systems, this is in fact the essence of what we've been saying form the beginning.[38]

As Molly Sauter says of DDoS attacks in particular, one of the functions of prefigurative activity is constitutive. To the extent that the networked resistance movements of the past twenty years are prefigurative, their mode of organization is as important for the ways it creates a sense of subjective identity and habitual ways of doing things that prefigure the successor society – the ways it constitutes the successor society as a self-conscious force – as for the influence it has on the institutions of the existing society. Sauter, borrowing a James Scott quote on "hidden

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38 Tiberius Brastaviceanu, "What are the #occupy camps?" *Multitude Project*, October 18, 2011
<http://multitudeproject.blogspot.com/2011/10/what-are-occupation-camps.html>.

transcripts" from *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, writes that DDoS attacks create a common medium in which participants "recognize the full extent to which their claims, their dreams, their anger is shared by other subordinates with whom they have not been in direct touch."[39]

Zeynep Tufekci argued, against the dismissals of theorists like Evgeny Morozov:

> 1- The capacities of the Internet that are most threatening to authoritarian regimes are not necessarily those pertaining to spreading of censored information but rather its ability to support the formation of a counter-public that is outside the control of the state. In other words, it is not that people are waiting for that key piece of information to start their revolt—and that information just happens to be behind the wall of censorship—but that they are isolated, unsure of the power of the regime, unsure of their position and potential.
>
> 2- Dissent is not just about knowing what you think but about the formation of a public. A public is not just about what you know. Publics form through knowing that other people know what you know–and also knowing that you know what they know....
>
> 3- Thus, social media can be the most threatening part of the Internet to an authoritarian regime through its capacity to create a public(ish) sphere that is integrated into everyday life of millions of people and is outside the direct control of the state partly because it is so widespread and partly because it is not solely focused on politics....[40]is shared by other subordinates with whom they have not been in direct touch."[41]

39 James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, 1990) , p. 223.

40 Zeynep Tufekci, "As Egypt Shuts off the Net: Seven Theses on Dictator's Dilemma," *technosociology*, January 28, 2011 <http://technosociology.org/?p=286>.

41 Molly Sauter, *The Coming Swarm: DDoS Actions, Hacktivism, and Civil Disobedience on the Internet* (New York, London, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 72.

Stigmergy. "Stigmergy" is a term coined by biologist Pierre-Paul Grasse in the 1950s to describe the process by which termites coordinate their activity. Social insects like termites and ants coordinate their efforts through the independent responses of individuals to environmental triggers like chemical markers, without any need for a central coordinating authority.[42] It was subsequently applied to the analysis of human society.

Applied by way of analogy to human society, stigmergy refers primarily to the kinds of networked organization associated with wikis, group blogs, and "leaderless" organizations configured along the lines of networked cells.

> The termites do not communicate about who is to do what, how or when. Their only communication is indirect: the partially executed work of the ones provides information to the others about where to make their own contribution. In this way, there is no need for a centrally controlled plan, workflow, or division of labor.
>
> While people are of course much more intelligent than social insects and do communicate, open access development uses essentially the same stigmergic mechanism...: any new or revised document or software component uploaded to the site of a community is immediately scrutinized by the members of the community that are interested to use it. When one of them discovers a shortcoming, such as a bug, error or lacking functionality, that member will be inclined to either solve the problem him/herself, or at least point it out to the rest of the community, where it may again entice someone else to take up the problem. [43]

Mark Elliott, in his doctoral dissertation on stigmergy, contrasts stigmergic coordination with social negotiation. Social negotiation is the traditional method of organizing collaborative group efforts, through agreements and compromise mediated by discussions between individuals. The exponential growth in the number of communications with the size of the group, obviously, imposes constraints on the feasible size of a collaborative group, before coordination must be achieved by hierarchy and top-down authority. Stigmergy, on the other hand, permits collaboration on an unlimited scale

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42 Mark Elliott, "Stigmergic Collaboration: The Evolution of Group Work," *M/C Journal*, May 2006 <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0605/03-elliott.php>.

43 Heylighen , "Why is Open Access Development so Successful? Stigmergic organization and the economics of information ," draft contribution to B. Lutterbeck, M. Bärwolff & R. A. Gehring (eds.), *Open Source Jahrbuch 2007* (Lehmanns Media, 2007) <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/Papers/OpenSourceStigmergy.pdf>, p. 7.

by individuals acting independently. This distinction between social negotiation and stigmergy is illustrated, in particular, by the contrast between traditional models of co-authoring and collaboration in a wiki.[44] Individuals communicate indirectly, "via the stigmergic medium."[45]

The distinction between social negotiation and stigmergic coordination parallels Elliott's distinction, elsewhere, between "discursive collaboration" and "stigmergic collaboration." The "discursive elaboration of shared representations (ideas)" is replaced by "the annotation of material and digital artefacts as embodiments of these representations." "Additionally, when stigmergic collaboration is extended by computing and digital networks, a considerable augmentation of processing capacity takes place which allows for the bridging of the spatial and temporal limitations of discursive collaboration, while subtly shifting points of negotiation and interaction away from the social and towards the cultural."[46]

Modular, building-block structures are ubiquitous. Why? Because such a structure "transforms a system's ability to learn, evolve and adapt... Once a set of building blocks... has been tweaked and refined and thoroughly debugged through experience... then it can generally be adapted and recombined to build a great many new concepts... Certainly that's a much more efficient way to create something new than starting all over from scratch. And that fact, in turn, suggests a whole new mechanism for adaptation in general. Instead of moving through that immense space of possibilities step by step, so to speak, an adaptive system can reshuffle its building blocks and take giant leaps." A small number of building blocks can be shuffled and recombined to make a huge number of complex systems.[47]

If you start with a large number of modular individuals, each capable of interacting with a few other individuals, and acting on other individuals according to a simple grammar of a few rules, under the right circumstances the modular individuals can undergo a rapid phase transition, according to systems theorist Stuart Kauffman: "The growth of complexity really does have something to do with far-from-equilibrium systems building themselves up, cascading to higher and higher levels of

44 Elliott, "Stigmergic Collaboration."

45 Mark Elliott, "Some General Off-the-Cuff Reflections on Stigmergy," *Stigmergic Collaboration*, May 21, 2006 <http://stigmergiccollaboration.blogspot.com/2006/05/some-general-off-cuff-reflections-on.html>.

46 Mark Elliott, *Stigmergic Collaboration: A Theoretical Framework for Mass Collaboration*. Doctoral Dissertation, Centre for Ideas, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne (October 2007) , pp. 9-10

47 M. Mitchell Waldrop, *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore: Simon & Schuster, 1992), pp. 169-170.

organization. Atoms, molecules, autocatalytic sets, et cetera." And the new higher level entities, in turn, can interact among themselves, perhaps creating another autocatalytic phase transition to a higher level.[48]

Gus diZerega's discussion of spontaneous orders closely parallels the concept of stigmergy:

> Hayek and Polanyi identified the basic processes that generate spontaneous orders. They arise from networks of independent equals whose actions generate positive and negative feedback that help guide future actors in pursuing their own independently conceived plans, thereby continuing the feedback process. Each person is a node within a network and is linked by feedback, with each node free to act on its own. The feedback they generate minimizes the knowledge anyone needs about the system as a whole in order to succeed within it.
>
> All spontaneous orders possess certain abstract features in common. Participants are equal in status and all are equally subject to whatever rules must be followed to participate within the order. All are free to apply these rules to any project of their choosing. Anything that can be pursued without violating a rule is permitted, including pursuing mutually contradictory goals. Finally, these rules facilitate cooperation among strangers based on certain broadly shared values that are simpler than the values actually motivating many people when they participate. Compared to human beings, spontaneous orders are "value-thin."[49]

David de Ugarte quotes the Rand theorists John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, in "Swarming and the Future of Conflict." "[N]etwar," they say,

> is a privateers' war in which many small units "already know what they must do", and are aware that "they must communicate with each other not in order to prepare for action, but only as a consequence of action, and, above all, through action."[50]

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48 *Ibid.*, pp. 316-317.

49 Gus DiZerega, "Outlining a New Paradigm," *Cosmos and Taxis* 1:1 (2013), p. 9.

50 David de Ugarte, *The Power of Networks : An Illustrated Manual for People, Collectives, and Companies Driven to Cyberactivism.* Translated by Asunción Álvarez (n.d.), p. 62 <http://deugarte.com/gomi/the-power-of-networks.pdf>.

Critics of "digital communism" like Jaron Lanier and Mark Helprin, who condemn network culture for submerging "individual authorial voice" in the "collective," couldn't be more clueless if they tried. Stigmergy synthesizes the highest realizations of both individualism and collectivism, and represents each of them in its most completely actualized form, without qualifying or impairing either in any way. Michel Bauwens uses the term "cooperative individualism":

> this turn to the collective that the emergence of peer to peer represents does not in any way present a loss of individuality, even of individualism. Rather it "transcends and includes" individualism and collectivism in a new unity, which I would like to call "cooperative individualism". The cooperativity is not necessarily intentional (i.e. the result of conscious altruism), but constitutive of our being, and the best applications of P2P, are based on this idea.[51]

Stigmergy is not "collectivist" in the traditional sense, as it was understood in the days when a common effort on any significant scale required a large organization to represent the collective, and the administrative coordination of individual efforts through a hierarchy. But it is the ultimate realization of collectivism, in that it removes the transaction cost of concerted action by many individuals.

It is the ultimate in individualism because all actions are the free actions of individuals, and the "collective" is simply the sum total of individual actions. Every individual is free to formulate any innovation she sees fit, without any need for permission from the collective. Every individual or voluntary association of individuals is free to adopt the innovation, or not, as they see fit. The extent to which any innovation is adopted results entirely from the unanimous consent of every voluntary grouping that adopts it. Each innovation is modular (meaning the project "can be broken down into smaller components... that can be independently produced before they are assembled into a whole"[52]), and may be adopted into any number of larger projects where it is found useful. Any grouping where there is disagreement over adoption may fork and replicate their project with or without the innovation.

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51 Michel Bauwens, "Individuality, Relationality, and the Collective in the P2P era," *P2P Foundation Blog*, May 15, 2010 <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/individuality-relationality-and-the-collective-in-the-p2p-era/2010/05/15>.
52 Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, p. 100.

In this regard it attains the radical democratic ideal of *unanimous* consent of the governed, which is never completely possible under any representative or majoritarian system. Consent – the individual's partcipation in the decisions that affected her – was the central value of Jeffersonian democracy. The smaller the unit of governance, and the closer it was to the individual, the closer it approached the ideal of unanimous consent to all acts of government. Hence Jefferson's ward republics, whose chief virtue was the increased role of each individual in influencing the outcome of policy. But this ideal can only be fully attained when the unit of governance is the individual. So majority rule was the lesser evil, a way to approximate as closely as possible to the spirit of unanimous consent in cases where an entire group of people had to be bound by a single decision. Stigmergy removes the need for any individual to be bound by the group will. When all group actions reflect the unanimous will of the participants, as permitted by stigmergic organization, the ideal of unanimous consent is finally achieved in its fullness.

Group action is facilitated with greater ease and lower transaction costs than ever before, but all "group actions" are the unanimous actions of the participating individuals. As described by Heather Marsh:

> With stigmergy, an initial idea is freely given, and the project is driven by the idea, not by a personality or group of personalities. No individual needs permission (competitive) or consensus (cooperative) to propose an idea or initiate a project. There is no need to discuss or vote on the idea, if an idea is exciting or necessary it will attract interest. The interest attracted will be from people actively involved in the system and willing to put effort into carrying the project further, not empty votes from people with little interest or involvement. Since the project is supported or rejected based on contributed effort, not empty votes, input from people with more commitment to the idea will have greater weight. Stigmergy also puts individuals in control over their own work, they do not need group permission to tell them what system to work on or what part to contribute.
>
> The person with the initial idea may or may not carry the task further. Evangelizing the idea is voluntary, by a group that is excited by the idea; they may or may not be the ones to carry it out. It is unnecessary to seek start up funding and supporters; if an idea is good it will receive the support required.... Secrecy and competition is

unnecessary because once an idea is given, it and all new development belongs to anyone who chooses to work on it. Anyone can submit work for approval, the idea cannot die or be put on hold by personalities; acceptance or rejection is for the work contributed, not the person contributing it. All ideas are accepted or rejected based on the needs of the system....

Communication between nodes of a system is on an as needed basis. Transparency allows information to travel freely between the various nodes, but a formal relationship or communication method is neither necessary nor desirable. Information sharing is driven by the information, not personal relationships. If data is relevant to several nodes it will be immediately transmitted to all, no formal meetings between official personalities are necessary.

...It is neither reasonable nor desirable for individual thought and action to be subjugated to group consensus in matters which do not affect the group, and it is frankly impossible to accomplish complex tasks if every decision must be presented for approval; that is the biggest weakness of the hierarchical model.[53]

In short, as Bauwens describes it, "Peer production is based on the elimination of permission-asking and a shift to the self-selection of tasks..."[54]

This is basically Eric Raymond's "Bazaar" model of open-source development, as illustrated in a hypothetical case by Benkler:

Imagine that one person, or a small group of friends, wants a utility. It could be a text editor, photo-retouching software, or an operating system. The person or small group starts by developing a part of this project, up to a point where the whole utility – if it is simple enough – or some important part of it, is functional, though it might have much room for improvement. At this point, the person makes the program freely available to others, with its source code – instructions in a human-readable language that explains how the software does whatever it does when compiled into a machine-readable language.

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53 Heather Marsh, "Stigmergy," *GeorgieBC's Blog*, December 24, 2012 <http://georgiebc.wordpress.com/2012/12/24/stigmergy-2/>.

54 Michel Bauwens, "Interview on Peer to Peer Politics with Cosma Orsi," *P2P Foundation Blog*, April 10, 2008 <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/interview-on-peer-to-peer-politics-with-cosma-orsi/2008/04/10>.

When others begin to use it, they may find bugs, or related utilities that they want to add (e.g., the photo-retouching software only increases size and sharpness, and one of its users wants it to allow changing colors as well). The person who has found the bug or is interested in how to add functions to the software may or may not be the best person in the world to actually write the software fix. Nevertheless, he reports the bug or the new need in an Internet forum of users of the software. That person, or someone else, then thinks that they have a way of tweaking the software to fix the bug or add the new utility. They then do so, just as the first person did, and release a new version of the software with the fix or the added utility. The result is a collaboration between three people – the first author, who wrote the initial software; the second person, who identified a problem or shortcoming; and the third person, who fixed it. This collaboration is not managed by anyone who organizes the three, but is instead the outcome of them all reading the same Internet-based forum and using the same software, which is released under an open, rather than proprietary, license. This enables some of its users to identify problems without asking anyone's permission and without engaging in any transactions.[55]

In a hierarchy, all communications between members or between local nodes must pass through a limited number of central nodes. The only communications which are allowed to pass from one member or local node to another are those which meet the standards for distribution of those who control the central nodes. Only a few nodes within a hierarchy have the power to transmit; hence the use of the phrase "one-to-many" to describe its topology. The version of local news that appears in the local newspaper under the byline of a local journalist may be far superior in relevant detail and analysis, but it is the wire service version – even if far inferior in quality – which appears in local newspapers all around the world. It is only the communications approved by the Party Secretariat that are heard by all local cells of a party.[56]

But in a distributed network, every node has the power to transmit, and any two nodes can communicate directly with each other without passing through a central node or obtaining the approval of whoever controls that node. A network is "plurarchical," in de Ugarte's terminology, rather than

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55 Benkler, pp. 66-67.
56 De Ugarte, *The Power of Networks*, p. 38.

democratic. Instead of the individual members simply selecting who controls the central nodes, "[s]omeone makes a proposal and everyone who wishes to join in can do so. The range of the action in question will depend on the degree to which the proposal is accepted. This system is called a pluriarchy...." Democracy is a "scarcity system" in which decision-making power is rivalrous: "the collective must face an either/or choice, between one filter and another, between one representative and another." In a distributed network, on the other hand, decision-making power is non-rivalrous. Each individual's decision affects only herself, and does not impede the ability of others to do likewise. "Even if the majority not only disagreed with a proposal, but also acted against it, it wouldn't be able to prevent the proposal from being carried out."[57] "[I]n the blogosphere," de Ugarte writes elsewhere,

> a space where the social cost of an extra post is zero, any blogger's publishing his or her information does not decrease anyone else's publication possibilities. The marginal cost is zero. The need to collectively decide what is published and what is not simply disappears. As opposed to scarcity logic, which generates the need for democratic decision, abundant logic opens the door to pluriarchy.
>
> In such a universe, every collective or hierarchical decision on what to publish or not can only be conceived as an artificial generation of scarcity, a decrease in diversity, and an impoverishment for all.[58]

Hardt and Negri describe the form of organization they call the "multitude" – as opposed to the monolithic "people," the atomized, undifferentiated "masses," and the homogeneous "working class" – in terms that sound very much like stigmergy.

> The people has traditionally been a unitary conception. The population, of course, is characterized by all kinds of differences, but the people reduces that diversity to a unity and makes of the population a single identity: "the people" is one. The multitude, in contrast, is many. The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity – different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the

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57 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

58 De Ugarte, *Phyles: Economic Democracy in the Network* Century (n.d.), pp. 18-19 <http://deugarte.com/gomi/ phyles.pdf>.

world; and different desires. The multitude is a multiplicity of all these singular differences. The masses are also contrasted with the people because they too cannot be reduced to a unity or an identity. The masses certainly are composed of all types and sorts, but really one should not say that different social subjects make up the masses. The essence of the masses is indifference: all differences are submerged and drowned in the masses. All the colors of the population fade to gray... In the multitude, social differences remain different. The multitude is many-colored, like Joseph's magical coat. Thus the challenge posed by the concept of multitude is for a social multiplicity to manage to communicate and act in common while remaining internally different.

Finally, we should also distinguish the multitude from the working class.... The multitude... is an open, inclusive concept. It tries to capture the importance of the recent shifts in the global economy: on the one hand, the industrial working class no longer plays a hegemonic role in the global economy...; and on the other hand, production today has to be conceived not merely in economic terms but more generally as social production—not only the production of material goods but also the production of communications, relationships, and forms of life. The multitude is thus composed potentially of all the diverse figures of social production.... [A] distributed network such as the Internet is a good initial image or model for the multitude because, first, the various nodes remain different but are all connected in the Web, and, second, the external boundaries of the network are open such that new nodes and new relationships can always be added.[59]

The multitude, unlike the people, in traditional political philosophy cannot rule as a sovereign power because it "is composed of a set of *singularities*... whose differences cannot be reduced to sameness." Yet "although it remains multiple, it is not fragmented, anarchical [sic], or incoherent."[60]

Their description of the "common," or background against which the multitude cooperates, is quite similar to Elliot's conception of the stigmergic medium against which individuals coordinate their actions via markers.

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59 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004), xiv-xv.
60 *Ibid.* p. 99.

> Insofar as the multitude is neither an identity (like the people) nor uniform (like the masses), the internal differences of the multitude must discover *the common* that allows them to communicate and act together. The common we share, in fact, is not so much discovered as it is produced.... Our communication, collaboration and cooperation are not only based on the common, but they in turn produce the common in an expanding spiral relationship. This production of the common tends today to be central to every form of social production, no matter how locally circumscribed, and it is, in fact, the primary characteristic of the new dominant forms of labor today. Labor itself, on other words, tends through the transformations of the economy to create and be embedded in cooperative and communicative networks. Anyone who works with information or knowledge... relies on the common knowledge passed down from others and in turn creates new common knowledge.[61]

Indeed, in their description of the swarming activity of the multitude, they appeal explicitly to the behavior of stigmergically organized termite colonies.[62]

Hardt and Negri also attribute an internal tendency toward democracy to the multitude, in terms much like what Sitrin and Graeber call "horizontalism." The modern history of resistance movements displays a shift from "centralized forms of revolutionary dictatorship and commnd" to "network organizations that displace authority in collaborative relationships" (this was written after the rise of the Zapatistas and the Seattle movement, but before the Arab Spring or the Occupy movement). Not only do resistance movements aim at the creation of a democratic society, but also tend "to create internally, within the organizational structure, democratic relationships."[63]

A stigmergic organization is organized on a modular basis, and each discrete module of work is carried out by someone who volunteered to do it because it's something they care about (often passionately) and they were empowered to do it without waiting for anyone else's permission. So each task in a stigmergic organization is carried out by those most interested in it. Anyone who sees an opportunity for improvement, or has a eureka moment, can immediately jump in and get their hands dirty, and doesn't

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61 *Ibid.* xv.
62 *Ibid.* p. 91.
63 *Ibid.* xvi.

have to work at it past the point where it ceases to be a joy for them.

To the extent that progress depends on the Shoulders of Giants Effect – people building on each other's contributions – a stigmergic organization that facilitates collaboration, and does so without enforcing any barriers (like patents and copyrights) to making use of others' ideas or creations, is the ideal embodiment of that concept.

Stigmergy is ideal for facilitating division of labor, with those best suited to a task selecting it for themselves. The Left – even those on the anarchist Left, who should know better – is plagued with the lionization of "activism" and guilt-tripping of anyone who lacks sufficient activist street cred. If your primary talent is writing or theory, according to this valuation, you're a second-class Leftist. If you're not "doing something" – which translates more or less into participating in demos – you're a poser. But when viewed in light of the stigmergy paradigm, this view of things is just plain stupid. It makes far more sense for each person to do what she is best at, and let others make use of her contributions in whatever way is relevant to their own talents. The Pirate Bay co-founder Rick Falkvinge writes:

> ...if you have a large assembly of people who are forced to agree on every movement, including the mechanism for what constitutes such agreement, then you rarely achieve anything at all.
>
> Therefore, as you build a swarm, it is imperative that everybody is empowered to act in the swarm just through what they believe will further its goals – but no one is allowed to empower themselves to restrict others, neither on their own nor through superior numbers.
>
> This concept – that people are allowed, encouraged and expected to assume speaking and acting power for themselves in the swarm's name, but never the kind of power that limits others' right to do the same thing – is a hard thing to grasp for many....
>
> As a result, somebody who believes the swarm should take a certain action to further its goals need only start doing it. If others agree that the action is beneficial, then they will join in on that course of action....
>
> **You do the vision. The swarm does the talking.**

Traditional marketing says that a message needs to stay constant to penetrate. My experience says that's total hogwash....

If somebody comes up to you and tells you a factual statement in a language that you identify as that of a group you dislike, you are very likely to discard that message as false, despite its actual truthness. In the same vein, if somebody that dresses, speaks, and acts in a manner consistent with your social standards tells you a factual statement, then you are likely to accept it as plausible and maybe examine it on its own merits later.

This sounds obvious. Yet, it has not been used in the marketing of ideas before swarms arrived on stage.

The recipe is ridiculously simple: communicate your vision to everybody, and let the thousands of activists translate your vision into words that fit their specific social context. Don't make a one-size-fits-all message that everybody has to learn. It will be a one-size-fits-none.[64]

In sum, the transition to a society organized around stigmergic coordination through self-organized networks involves an exponential increase in agility, productivity and resilience.

The full power of such synergetic interaction supported by stigmergy is seen in complex, creative work environments, where different agents contribute different skills, experiences and perspectives. Here, the work done by one individual is enhanced by the work of others with complementary abilities in a way that the single individual never could have achieved. Wikipedia and communities developing open source software development are prime examples, having achieved results that could not even have been reached via hierarchical, command-and-control strategies of coordination. Smaller scale examples are people posting photos, ideas, artwork, or essays on their blog, Twitter feed, or Facebook page, and getting feedback from friends, followers, or strangers, which help them to further develop their insights, while inspiring these others to build further on their experiences. In such cases, the benefits that accrue to the

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64 Rick Falkvinge, "Selling Your Vision With a Swarm," *Falkvinge on Infopolicy*, February 18, 2012 <http://falkvinge.net/2012/02/18/selling-your-vision-with-a-swarm/>.

"cooperators" are direct, concrete, and stimulating enough to motivate them to produce more of such "public traces" in their medium of choice (Wikipedia, Facebook, …).

Thanks to the user-friendly electronic medium, the material and human cost of publishing such traces is nearly zero. This combination of strong motivation, minimal cost, and effective stigmergic coordination turns the medium into a powerful system for mobilizing joint action. The result is a rapidly expanding "collaborative commons," a virtual workspace for stigmergic (and more traditional) cooperation that encompasses the planet. This world-wide stigmergic medium is presently developing into the equivalent of a global brain able to efficiently tackle the collective challenges of society. [65]

Thus, stigmergy can be seen as a fundamental mechanism of self-organization: it allows global, coordinated activity to emerge out of local, independent actions. Like self-organization in general, stigmergy relies on feedback: action elicits action, via the intermediate of the trace. This feedback is typically positive, in that actions intensify and elaborate the trace, thus eliciting more intense and diverse further actions. The resulting virtuous cycle explains in part why stigmergic organization is so surprisingly effective, enabling the construction of complex structures – such as a termite hill, a network of trails, or a global encyclopedia – in a very short time, even when starting from scratch. When needed, feedback can also be negative: errors, disturbances or "overshoots" that make the trace deviate from its ideal shape will elicit actions that correct the deviation.[66]

Unlike the classic Fordist model of labor struggle rooted in the hierarchical party (the Old Left), the new networked politics – although operating without any hierarchical coordinating mechanism – nevertheless brings together a variety of movements with their own goals, without subordinating them to any common agenda.[67]

Writing in retrospect about the post-Seattle anti-globalization movement in 2005, Michel Bauwens anticipated many of the most remarked-on features of the Arab Spring and Occupy:

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65 Heylighen, "Stigmergy" p. 31.
66 *Ibid.* p. 33.
67 *Ibid.*, p. 217.

A key underlying philosophy of the movement is the paradigm of non-representationality. In classic modern political ideology, participating members elect representatives, and delegate their authority to them. Decisions taken by councils of such representatives then can take binding decisions, and are allowed to speak "for the movement". But such a feature is totally absent from the alterglobalisation movement. No one, not even the celebrities, can speak for anyone else, though they can speak in their own name. Another distinguishing feature, is that we can no longer speak of "permanent organizations". While unions, political movements, and international environmental and human rights NGO's do participate, and have an important role, the movement innovates by mobilizing many unaffiliated individuals, as well as all kinds of temporary ad hoc groups created within or without the internet. Thus we can add to the de-formalization and de-institutionalization principles explained above, another one that we could call the process of de-organization, as long as we are clear on its meaning, which refers to the transcendence of 'fixed' organizational formats which allows power to consolidate.

A commonly heard criticism is that "they have no alternative", but this in fact reflects their new approach to politics. The main demand is not for specifics, though that can occasionally be part of a consensus platform (such as "abandoning the debt for developing countries"), more importantly is the underlying philosophy, that 'another world is possible', but that what is most important is not asking for specific alternative, but rather for an open process of world governance that is not governed by the power politics and private interests of the elite, but determined by all the people in an autonomous fashion that recognized the wide diversity of desired futures. [68]

The networked resistance movements of recent years have been governed by stigmergic principles of organization. As W. Lance Bennett, Alexandra Segerberg and Shawn Walker note, they compare in many particulars to other projects like open-source software and Wikipedia:

As large-scale crowds organize, we often see in the early stages the cooperative development of websites, the customization of social media platforms and channels, and the creation and sharing of

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68 Michel Bauwens, "P2P and Human Evolution: Peer to peer as the premise of a new mode of civilization " (The essay is an emanation of the Foundation for P2P Alternative, Draft 1.1, March 1, 2005), p. 33.

content through these and other means of communication such as phones, SMS, and email. The processes and results of such communication resemble the self-organization of open peer production and open collaboration. This is to be expected, as the logic at the heart of connective action, self-motivated sharing, is also the logic at the heart of much peer production. Classic examples of peer production include information and knowledge commons such as Wikipedia, collaborative software such as Linux, and online news and discussion groups such as the political blog site the Daily Kos. They also include collaborative activist projects such as the network of Independent Media Centers (IMCs) of the global justice movement. Such projects may involve vast numbers of dispersed and differently engaged individuals that come together to create a common good – be it protest or software – around which further collective action will revolve. Despite the open-ended nature of such participation, peer-produced projects involve self-motivated production and self-organization: participants ideally contribute to the project in modular and granular ways and help shape the conditions of the action so that the projects build on self-selection and decentralization rather than coercion and hierarchically assigned tasks.[69]

These networked, horizontal movements, and their predecessors kicked off a decade ago by the Seattle anti-WTO demonstrations, are another example of the phenomenon Tom Coates described: work that once required large institutions, that now can be produced with equal quality in the home.[70]

To quote Kevin Kelly, it was inevitable that "decentralized socialism on the net would spill over into the other realms of life. You can't spend all day in an open-sourced, all-sharing, peer-to-peer network and not begin to think that the rest of your world should also operate in the same way."[71]

Orsan Senalp sees this as a Global P2P Revolution taking place from Tahrir Square on, but with its roots in the first networked activism of the 1990s:

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69 W. Lance Bennett, Alexandra Segerberg and Shawn Walker, "Organization in the crowd: peer production in large-scale networked protests," Information, Communication & Society, 17:2 (2014), p. 6.

70 Tom Coates. "(Weblogs and) The Mass Amateurisation of (Nearly) Everything..." Plasticbag.org, September 3, 2003 <http://www.plasticbag.org/archives/2003/09/weblogs_and_the_mass_amateurisation_of_nearly_everything>

71 Kevin Kelly, "The Technology of Global Unrest," *The Technium*, September 28, 2011 <http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2011/09/the_technology.php>.

The time table can also be read as the crystallisation of a P2P revolutionary work which can also be linked back to feminist uprising, environmentalist awakening, Zapatistas, the Battle of Seattle, Social Forums, the anti-war movement and others. Yet the process of global rising up has been accelerated by besides the Icelandian and Tunisian events, the Egyptian, Spaniard, Greek and UK city square occupations. The 2011 International Road to Dignity reflects this momentum of taking over the city centres. So we are moving from a war of position to the war of manoeuvre.

The peer to peer processes are at the core of this rising revolutionary agency, as well as to the structural changes we have been experiencing since the late 60s. These two dialectically shape each other within the process. Against this backdrop the precariat, peer labour and immaterial labour [including social justice activists working for the NGO sector] are forming a constellation of alter forces, towards a grand alliance without the consciousness of a class. The formation of this new global historic bloc of alter forces can be indicating the rise of a New Transnational Labour Class [so in formation].

The underlying shift is in the nature of the productive forces and productive relations – the shift in telecommunication and transportation infrastructure and the rise of the internet – might be providing us a possibility to overcome not only the new contradiction between the sub structure and super structure of the world economy and politics, but also the organisational and leadership problems.

The 17th September Occupations of Paris and Wall Street and occupations of Washington DC and Brussels can be compared to the offensive of the forces of Spartacus to the Rome, in this sense.[72]

To quote Falkvinge again:

A Swarm is a new kind of organization, made possible by available and affordable mass communication. Where it used to take hundreds of full-time employees to organize 100,000 people, today that can be done—and is done—by somebody in their spare time from their kitchen.[73]

72 Orsan Senalp: Global Class Warfare," WilliamBowles.info, September 29, 2011 <http://williambowles.info/2011/09/ 29/ orsan-senalp-global-class-warfare/>.

73 Rick Falkvinge, "Swarmwise: What Is A Swarm?" *Falkvinge on Infopolicy*, August 8, 2011 <http://falkvinge.net/2011/

Falkvinge also appeals to Raymond's Bazaar model:

> If you want leadership in a Swarm, you stand up and say "I'm going to do X, because I think it will accomplish Y. Anybody who wants to join me in doing X is more than welcome." Anybody in the Swarm can stand up and say this, and everybody is encouraged to. This quickly creates an informal but tremendously strong leadership structure where people seek out roles that maximize their impact in furthering the Swarm's goals—all happening organically without central planning and organization charts.[74]

Networked or stigmergic organizations undergo generational innovations with the speed of replicating yeast, because members are free to innovate on a modular basis on their own initiative and their contributions are immediately free to anyone in the network who wants to adopt them. Falkvinge applies this general rule to the networked protest movements that began in January 2011:

> At the bottom line, what sets a Swarm apart from traditional organizations is its blinding speed of operation, its next-to-nothing operating costs, and its large number of very devoted volunteers. Traditional corporations and democratic institutions appear to work at glacial speeds from the inside of a Swarm. That's also why a Swarm can change the world: it runs in circles around traditional organizations, in terms of quality and quantity of work, as well as in resource efficiency.[75]

Vinay Gupta expressed the same idea in a couple of tweets:

> Noble Saint Hexayurt does the heavy lifting, every hexayurt build makes four more likely.

> I cannot save people, there are too many. I can give ideas and maybe some examples, but only an idea is big enough to help everyone.

Exactly. The primary bottleneck in today's world is not physical resources, but the transmission of knowledge. Why do something that I'm bad at, when the most cost-effective use of my time and talent is writing? Putting

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08/01/swarmwise-what-is-a-swarm/?>.

74 *Ibid.*

75 *Ibid.*

ideas together and propagating them is "doing something." The best way to maximize bang for the buck is simply to capitalize on the potential of network culture: that is, put maximum effort into just getting the information out there, giving the government lots and lots of negative publicity, and then "letting a thousand flowers bloom" when it comes to efforts to leverage it into political action. If you do that, the political pressure itself will be organized by many different individuals and groups operating independently, spurred by their own outrage, without even sharing any common program. When Woodward and Bernstein uncovered Watergate, they didn't start trying to organize a political movement to capitalize on it. They just published the info and a firestorm resulted.

The Occupy movement follows exactly the Bazaar pattern. From the outset, Occupy has generated innovations using the same model John Robb has noted in Al Qaeda and the file-sharing movement. Robb calls it an "open source protest":

> Open source protest is an organizational technique. Probably the only organizational technique that can assemble a massive crowd in today's multiplexed environment. Essential rules of open source protest include:
>
> > A promise. A simple goal/idea that nearly everyone can get behind. Adbusters did pretty good with "occupy wall street." Why? Nearly everyone hates the pervasive corruption of banks and Wall Street. It's an easy target.
> >
> > A plausible promise. Prove that the promise can work. They did. They actually occupied Wall Street and set up camp. They then got the message out.
> >
> > A big tent and an open invitation. It doesn't matter what your reason for protesting is as long as you hate/dislike Wall Street. The big tent is already in place (notice the diversity of the signage). Saw something similar from the Tea Party before it was mainstreamed/diminished.
> >
> > Let everyone innovate. Don't create a leadership group. The general assembly approach appears to work.

Support anyone in a leadership role that either a) grows the movement or b) advances the movement closer to its goal. Oppose (ignore) anybody that proposes a larger, more complex agenda or those that claim ownership over the movement.

If a new technique works, document it, use it again, and share it with everyone else. Copy everything that works.

Spread the word of the movement as widely as possible.

That's the gist of it....

What's the big picture? Global guerrillas are getting better at building open source protests. We are going to see more and they are likely to become a prominent feature of the geopolitical landscape. It will also be interesting to see if open source protests could end up taking down a Too Big To Fail bank (i.e. Goldman) or a US President in the next 5 years. That would be very cool to see.[76]

Later, he elaborates:

Open source protest is usually focused on a single overarching goal. In most recent cases, it's a call for a government that isn't corrupt.

"No corruption" is the type of goal everyone can get behind. To get a protest going, all there needs to be is a successful trigger event (a plausible promise).

Often, that can be as simple as a successful protest call by some group (or someone) on Facebook that takes off virally.

However, the motivations that actually get people to show up in the street *day after day* are more specific. Every individual or group that turns up has a very specific gripe/goal for protesting (some elements are often violent, but that's to be expected since there is so much diversity of motive). Yet, despite that diversity, everyone is still onboard with the simple overarching goal of the protest.

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76 John Robb, "OCCUPY WALL STREET (the theory)," *Global Guerrillas*, October 3, 2011
<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-the-theory.html>.

This diversity of motive makes it very hard for a government to tailor a response/action that will diffuse the protest.

It also make it nearly impossible for any single group or individual to seize control of the protest and use it to advance their own agenda. In our post ideological world, agreement is difficult to come by. That means that most people wouldn't agree with any protest leader's agenda (be it political, environmental, social, economic, or cultural).[77]

What's more, it's modular: a "self-organizing, self-replicating node."

Occupy is an interesting example of the self-organizing, replicating nodal network similar in nature to Transition town, United Religions Initiative, Food not Bombs etc...

Self-organizing, replicating movements have the ability to spread very fast, because they tap into the ability of everyone to participate and organize. There isn't a hierarchical bottleneck that the movement has to go through. And the system doesn't have to go through a hiring process, people swirl themselves into the mix.

The Transition town process has spread around the world very quickly in just 4 or 5 years. The Occupy movement has spread even faster.
The Occupy movement has a been a protest movement so far. It could also become a movement which builds a new socio-economic-political system. It could model what a new system would look like. If it did that then it would become autopoetic/self-creating.

A virus replicates by tapping into the DNA of another cell. The Occupy movement is operating like a virus in the sense that its tapping into the dissatisfaction with the current system. A virus replicates but it is not autopoetic.

For the Occupy movement to become autopoetic it needs to model new socio-economic-political methods which it itself uses to run itself. However it is not quite autopoietic, not quite self-creating. If it was self-creating then it would survive even if there was nothing to protest.

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77 Robb, "Protests Everywhere (here's why)," *Global Guerrillas*, July 7, 2013
<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2013/07/protests-everywhere-heres-why.html>.

The Occupy movement so far knows what it is against, there is a great opportunity for it to create what is for. That can happen at Occupy nodes if there is room for facilitated discussion of what are the best solutions. These solutions can then be modeled there. And replicated elsewhere.[78]

Shlok Vaidya describes the modular/stigmergic principles of organization in the Occupy movement quite well:

OWS currently consists of thousands/millions/hundreds of millions of cognitive nodes:

Connecting/infecting new nodes. As part of this, the organization is generating memes, testing against live audiences, and dropped if counterproductive. Trying to build sufficient capacity before...

Probing attack vectors. A botnet, like a storm, emphasizes growth of its own capacity before attacking (or raining). Mild DDoS on the Brooklyn bridge or around the Bank of America in SF. Anonymous phishing for corruption, etc. This is enabled by...

Decentralized command and control. Perhaps more specifically, modular design. Each protest in each city is led by independent affiliates (if not further broken down). Crashing a protest in Ohio has no impact on the rest of the network.[79]

Alexis Madrigal compares the platform/module architecture of OWS to Twitter's Application Programming Interface:

The most fascinating thing about Occupy Wall Street is the way that the protests have spread from Zuccotti Park to real and virtual spaces across the globe. Metastatic, the protests have an organizational coherence that's surprising for a movement with few actual leaders and almost no official institutions. Much of that can be traced to how

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78 "Occupy as Self-Organizing, Self-Replicating Node," *Open Collaboration*, October 13, 2011 <http://opencollaboration.wordpress.com/2011/10/13/occupy-as-self-organizing-self-replicating-nodet>; taken down, but quoted at "Occupy as Self-Organizing, Self-Replicating Node," Networked Activism and Asymmetric Conflict Study Group, LinkedIn <http://www.linkedin.com/groups/Occupy-as-selforganizing-replicating-node-4129775.S.79291616>.
79 Shlok Vaidya, "Occupy Wall Street, Botnets, and Thousand-Year Storms," *Shlok Vaidya*, October 5, 2011 <http://shloky.com/?p=3609>.

Occupy Wall Street has functioned in catalyzing other protests. Local organizers can choose from the menu of options modeled in Zuccotti, and adapt them for local use. Occupy Wall Street was designed to be mined and recombined, not simply copied.

….Occupy Wall Street today can be seen like the early days of Twitter.com. Nearly everyone accessed Twitter information through clients developed by people outside the Twitter HQ. These co-developers made Twitter vastly more useful by adding their own ideas to the basic functionality of the social network. These developers don't have to take in all of OWS data or use all of the strategies developed at OWS. Instead, they can choose the most useful information streams for their own individual applications (i.e. occupations, memes, websites, essays, policy papers).[80]

Those who criticize Occupy Wall Street for its lack of structure and leadership, for its lack of clear demands, Douglas Rushkoff writes, are unable "to comprehend a 21st century movement from the perspective of the 20th century politics, media, and economics in which we are still steeped."

In fact, we are witnessing America's first true Internet-era movement, which – unlike civil rights protests, labor marches, or even the Obama campaign – does not take its cue from a charismatic leader, express itself in bumper-sticker-length goals and understand itself as having a particular endpoint.

Yes, there are a wide array of complaints, demands, and goals from the Wall Street protesters: the collapsing environment, labor standards, housing policy, government corruption, World Bank lending practices, unemployment, increasing wealth disparity and so on. *Different people have been affected by different aspects of the same system – and they believe they are symptoms of the same core problem* [emphasis mine].

Are they ready to articulate exactly what that problem is and how to address it? No, not yet. But neither are Congress or the president who, in thrall to corporate America and Wall Street, respectively, have

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80 Alexis Madrigal, "Guide to the Occupy Wall Street API, Or Why the Nerdiest Way to Think About OWS is So Useful," *The Atlantic*, November 16, 2011 <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/11/a-guide-to-the-occupy-wall-street-api-or-why-the-nerdiest-way-to-think-about-ows-is-so-useful/248562/>.

consistently failed to engage in anything resembling a conversation as cogent as the many I witnessed as I strolled by Occupy Wall Street's many teach-ins this morning. There were young people teaching one another about, among other things, how the economy works, about the disconnection of investment banking from the economy of goods and services, the history of centralized interest-bearing currency, the creation and growth of the derivatives industry, and about the Obama administration deciding to settle with, rather than investigate and prosecute the investment banking industry for housing fraud.

Anyone who says he has no idea what these folks are protesting is not being truthful. Whether we agree with them or not, we all know what they are upset about, and we all know that there are investment bankers working on Wall Street getting richer while things for most of the rest of us are getting tougher. What upsets banking's defenders and politicians alike is the refusal of this movement to state its terms or set its goals in the traditional language of campaigns.

That's because, unlike a political campaign designed to get some person in office and then close up shop (as in the election of Obama), this is not a movement with a traditional narrative arc. As the product of the decentralized networked-era culture, it is less about victory than sustainability. It is not about one-pointedness, but inclusion and groping toward consensus. It is not like a book; it is like the Internet.[81]

Occupy didn't *need* a platform; Occupy itself *was* a platform. It was their lack of specific demands that gave them strength. Despite jabbering to the contrary from verticalists, their main focus was hard to miss: Hatred for Wall Street, for the concentration of wealth and for the unholy alliance between Big Business and the state. That common set of values was the basic operating platform of the movement. Beyond that, the specific agendas that could be built on that platform were beyond counting.

Occupy, with its organizational style and the cultural memes it propagates, was a source of strength for all those individual agendas. The loosely allied subgroups were modules operating on a common platform. The very fact that so many different groups share a common brand, united only by their enmity toward plutocracy, was the movement's source of power.

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81 Douglas Rushkoff, "Think Occupy Wall St. is a phase? You don't get it," *Rushkoff*, October 5, 2011 <http://www.rushkoff.com/blog/2011/10/5/think-occupy-wall-st-is-a-phase-you-dont-get-it.html>.

To repeat, that's the same stigmergic model of organization used by the open source software community. The basic platform can support as many modular utilities as there are developers. The utilities themselves reflect the needs and concerns of individual developers. Likewise, there are as many sub-movements piggybacked on Occupy as there are reasons for hating Wall Street, ways of being affected by it, and walks of life among the Occupiers.

In Occupy, like other stigmergically organized projects ranging from Linux and Wikipedia to al Qaeda, nobody needs "permission" from "leadership" to try out ideas. And whatever idea works for one node instantly becomes property of the whole network. "Occupy Our Homes," which sprang up almost overnight, was one example of such stigmergic innovation.

There's a shared perception of the evil, but as many emphases and agendas as there are people who've subjectively experienced the evil. In my father's house are many mansions. Robb explains it in pointed language:

> Occupy is an open source protest. That means it doesn't have a specific message. It is a container for many groups /motivations /passions held together by simplest of ideas: it is possible to permanently occupy of places of power. Anyone that tells you it needs to have a specific policy agenda is a) not an expert and b) still living in the 20th Century.[82]

What the "appoint leaders and set an agenda" people don't realize is that there's no way to do this without destroying the agility that characterizes stigmergic organization. The vertical approach

> can work at a reduced scale or in simple organizational structures. However, in more complex scenarios, it generally leads to heavy, slow, expensive, and high-maintenance structures. These are usually marred by rigidly determined, inside-outside distinctions that quickly face major difficulties when needing to add new participants at moments of peak activity.[83]

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82 John Robb, "OCCUPY NOTE 11/17/11 Contagion," *Global Guerrillas*, November 17, 2011 <http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2011/11/occupy-note-111711-contagion-ows.html>.

83 Madrilonia/@PinkNoiseRev, "Protest Analysis (5): Towards a new style of political organization for commons-oriented mobilizations ?" *P2P Foundation Blog*, July 14, 2013 <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/unity-without-convergencetowards-a-new-style-of-political-organization-for-commons-oriented-mobilizations/2013/07/14>.

Gradualism. The transition from capitalism to a post-capitalist system may resemble the transition from the Western Roman Empire to feudalism, or from feudalism to capitalism, more than conventional models of revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism.

A number of writers have explicitly drawn on such previous transitions as models for the hierarchy-network transition. Although our political culture, both Right and Left, envisions a hypothetical post-capitalist transition through the lens of the French and Russian revolutions – abrupt, catastrophic, and equated largely to the seizure of the state – there's no reason to assume it will be. It could just as easily be a decades-long, relatively gradual process like the decay of the Western Roman Empire, or of feudalism.

As James Livingston argues, we frequently identify the transition from capitalism to socialism (or some other post-capitalist mode of production) with some large-scale political revolution where a socialist political party seizes power. But that's not at all the pattern of transition from feudalism to capitalism.

> What happens when we stop looking for socialism in all the wrong places?
>
> Start here. When we think about the transition from feudalism to capitalism, we take the long view – we scan the four centuries from 1400 to 1800, looking for signs of fundamental but incremental change. To be sure, we assume that the great bourgeois revolutions of the seventeeth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were both symptoms and causes of this transition; in that sense, we proceed in our thinking as if capitalism were created by social movements, political activism, ideological extremism. Still, we know these early modern movements can't be compared to the communist parties that created state socialism in twentieth-century Russia, China, and Cuba, because in these more recent instances, self-conscious revolutionaries organized workers and peasants to overthrow capitalism and create socialism....
>
> In short, capitalism was the *unintended consequence* of bourgeois revolutions, whereas socialism has been the avowed purpose, or at least a crucial component, of every revolution since 1911....

….We don't measure the transition from feudalism to capitalism only by assessing the social origins and political-economic effects of bourgeois revolutions – we'd have to be daft to do so. Instead we ask when, how, where, and why social relations were transformed, over many years, so that a new mode of production and new modes of consciousness, emerged to challenge (if not supplant) the old. Or rather, in keeping with what Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci, and Stuart Hall have taught us, we ask *when* capitalism became the hegemonic mode in a mongrel social formation that contained fragments of a residual feudalism and harbingers of a precocious socialism. We don't think that capitalism was created overnight by revolutionary parties – Independents, Jacobins, Federalists, or Republicans – because we know from reading Marx that, as a mode of production, it reaches beyond the scope of any state power or legislative act. We know from reading Smith and Hegel that the development of capitalism means the articulation and expansion of civil society against the (absolutist) state.

Why, then, would we look for evidence of socialism only where a state seized by radicals of the Left inaugurates a dictatorship of the proletariat? Or, to lower the rhetorical volume and evidentiary stakes, why would we expect to find socialism only where avowed socialists or labor parties contend for state power? We should instead assume that socialism, like capitalism, is a cross-class cultural construction, to which even the bourgeoisie has already made significant contributions – just as the proletariat has long made significant contributions to the cross-class construction we know as capitalism. What follows?

We typically assume that socialism is the exclusive property of "the" working class, despite the simple fact that there has never been a socialist movement or system based on this one stratum. Why do we deny the historical evidence? We also typically assume that socialism requires the seizure or overthrow of the state, as in a Bolshevik "war of maneuver," rather than a cultural revolution, as in the "war of position" Gramsci proposed as an alternative to the Leninist template. Why do we think that socialism is, in this sense, the economic effect of political actions?

We typically assume that socialism is something signified by state command of civil society, rather than the other way around. Why? Why do we assume, in other words, that markets and socialism don't mix, that private enterprise and public goods – commutative and distributive justice – are always at odds? And why do we think, accordingly, that socialism must repudiate liberalism and its attendant, modern individualism, rather than think, with Eduard Bernstein and Sidney Hook, that socialism is their rightful heir?

Let's uproot our assumptions, in keeping with our radical calling. Let's look for the evidence of socialism in the same places we've always looked for the evidence of capitalism: in changing social relations of production *as well as* legislative acts and political actions, in the marketplace of ideas *as well as* porkbellies, in everyday life and popular culture *as well as* learned assessments of the American Dream, in uncoordinated efforts to free the distribution of information and music – the basic industries of a postindustrial society – from the "business model" quotes of the newspapers and record companies *as well as* social movements animated by anticapitalist ideas. By now we're accustomed to studies of the "culture of capitalism," or the culture of the market, which of course aren't the same thing – you can't have capitalism without markets, but you can have markets without capitalism – so let's get used to studying the culture of socialism *in* the market.[84]

John Holloway argues, in very similar language, that the post-capitalist transition will be an "interstitial process," much like the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

...at first sight, the interstitial view contrasts with the traditional view that 'we take power and we will bring social transformation from the top-down'. But in reality even that is still an interstitial concept because there was this idea that the state corresponds with society – that they are coterminous – which is obviously non-sense. State and society don't have the same boundaries. Given that there are some 200 states in the world-system, and given that we won't overthrow all these states on the same day, even if we want to focus on state power we will have to think interstitially. In this view, it's just that we are thinking of states as being the relevant interstices, which seems ridiculous.

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84 James Livingston, "How the Left Has Won," *Jacobin*, August 2012 <http://jacobinmag.com/2012/08/how-the-left-has-won/>.

What that means is that we are trying to take the most important form of organization that was constructed from the construction of capital. Everything in the last century suggests it doesn't work.

So we have to think of interstices, but in terms of our own forms of organization. States don't make much sense. We have to think in terms of something from below, creating our own forms of organization and interaction. We do it at the scales that we can: sometimes it's just a little thing, like this garden we're in. Sometimes it's bigger, like a big chunk of the state of Chiapas now being self-governed by the Zapatistas. The question then becomes: how can we promote the confluence of these cracks?

There is this idea that the transition from feudalism to capitalism was an interstitial process, but that the movement from capitalism to communism or socialism cannot be – and that's clearly wrong.[85]

Or as Chris Dillow much more succinctly put it:

Now, you might think... that... a socialist revolution is improbable.

It is, if you think a revolution is a Battleship Potemkin-type uprising of starvelings from their slumbers. But this is not the only type of revolution. The industrial revolution was perhaps the greatest transformation in human history. But it took decades, and few of those who lived through it – Marx being an exception – thought they were part of a revolution.

And perhaps we are seeing a slow-motion revolution. Credit unions and peer-to-peer lenders, owners of coffee shops competing against Starbucks, the steady rise in the numbers becoming self-employed, the growth of bloggers, tweeters and file-sharers are all taking small – not necessarily deliberate – steps away from hierarchical capitalism, just as early factory owners made small contributions to the industrial revolution.

What Erik Olin Wright calls interstitial transformations can ultimately add up to more radical economic change than windbags on marches.[86]

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85 Jerome Roos, "Talking About a Revolution With John Holloway," *John Holloway*, April 13, 2013
<http://www.johnholloway.com.mx/2013/05/01/talking-about-a-revolution-with-john-holloway/>.
86 Chris Dillow, "On Social Change," *Stumbling and Mumbling*, November 28, 2012
<http://stumblingandmumbling.typepad.com/stumbling_and_mumbling/2012/11/on-social-change.html>.

The post-capitalist class formation, Bauwens argues, will be one in which horizontal networks and p2p organization will replace the corporate-state nexus as the core, but markets and administration (i.e. the administration of commons) will play a large part. In the future some organizational elements which are currently dominant will be much weaker, and some currently nascent organizational forms will become the predominant part of the mix – all structured around a different coalition of class forces. But it will still be an evolving mixture of organizational forms.

> Do markets always have to be hub and spoke networks, can we have p2p markets? It also misses the important point that emerging peer production has a core of non-market mechanisms, with markets operating around the commons where the knowledge, code or design is deposited; moreover, I believe that the mutual coordination and stigmergy that is characteristic of immaterial production projects, will expand to material production through open supply chains and open book management, further diminishing the relative part of market dynamics.[87]

Commons-based peer production, as an alternative to both the capitalist corporation and the state, is characterized by enabling

> the direct social production of use value, through new life practices that are largely outside the control of capital, and with means of production which have been socialized to a very significant degree. These new processes are post-capitalist rather than capitalist, in the sense that they no longer need any specific role of capital for their reproduction.[88]

David Ronfeldt, in the context of his TIMN (Tribes, Institutions, Markets and Networks) framework, describes it as "coexistent layering."[89] Elsewhere, writing of Bauwens' conceptual schema, Ronfeldt says that the ascendancy of networks and p2p organization will disproportionately benefit and

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87 Michel Bauwens, "Do we need p2p to help markets deal with complexity, or does p2p get us beyond markets?" *P2P Foundation Blog*, December 12, 2012 <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/do-we-need-p2p-to-help-markets-deal-with-complexity-or-does-p2p-get-us-beyond-markets/2012/12/10>. Reproduced from a Facebook debate with John Robb, Franz Nahrada, Fabio Barone and Chris Cook.

88 Michel Bauwens, "Interview on Peer to Peer Politics with Cosma Orsi," *P2P Foundation Blog*, April 10, 2008 <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/interview-on-peer-to-peer-politics-with-cosma-orsi/2008/04/10>.

89 David Ronfeldt, "Q's & A's about "TIMN in 20 minutes" (2nd of 7): nature of the forms and their relationships," *Visions From Two Theories*, October 8, 2012 <http://twotheories.blogspot.com/2012/10/qs-as-about-timn-in-20-minutes-2nd-of-7.html>.

strengthen civil society, and profoundly alter older state and market institutions forced to accommodate themselves to a society in which the network form increasingly shapes the character of all functions.[90] The internal organization of state and corporation will either adapt in the face of competition from the increasing prevalence of networked, commons-based peer production in civil society, or be progressively supplanted by them and shrink into islands of holdover institutions from the previous society.

De Ugarte prefers the term "dual boot" to get a similar idea across:

> The metaphor is simple: society now runs on operating system that is frail and inadequate to the demands of those who live in it. Different groups and tendencies, in parallel, are trying to develop new economic models. To the extent that they do – and it's true that they/we are doing it, though it's not (yet) widespread – it will be established as an almost personal, or at least communitarian option: *What development model do we want in our city? What model of life and work do I want to follow?*
>
> It would be, and is, a gradual sort of *dual boot* in which both models would coexist, the traditional one based on large scales, and the new ones based on a productive economy fed by distributed networks, long-range technologies, free knowledge, and cultural change. These elements are present now, all arond us, though they are only hegemonic in concrete aspects.
>
> The basic idea is that the development of these economic alternatives is going to parallel the development of confederal forms of work, but also of social coverage and relationships between identities. The path is, as always, to build, to create a new reality, not to wait for a political change of whatever kind to reorder everything from top to bottom to fit our taste.[91]

According to Hardt and Negri, the relationship between the dominant class is the opposite of that Hobbes described at the dawn of the modern era.

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90 Ronfeldt, "Updates about missing posts (3rd of 5): Bauwens' 'partner state' (part 2 of 3) … vis à vis TIMN," *Visions From Two Theories*, April 3 <http://twotheories.blogspot.com/2014/04/updates-about-missing-posts-3rd-of-5.html>.
91 David de Ugarte, "Dual Boot," *Las Indias in English*, October 10, 2012 <http://english.lasindias.com/dual-boot/>.

> The new class ["the nascent bourgeoisie"] was not capable of guaranteeing social order on its own; it required a political power to stand above it.... Hobbes's *Leviathan* describes the form of sovereignty that subsequently develop in Europe in the form of the nation-state.... [W]e try to understand the nature of the emerging global class formation, the multitude.... Whereas the nascent bourgeoisie needed to call on a sovereign power to guarantee its interests, the multitude emerges from within the new imperial sovereignty and points beyond it. The multitude is working through Empire to create an alternative global society. Whereas the modern bourgeois had to fall back on the new sovereignty to consolidate its order, the postmodern revolution of the multitude looks forward, beyond imperial sovereignty. The multitude, in contrast to the bourgeoisie and all other exclusive, limited class formations, is capable of forming society autonomously....[92]

Another thing to keep in mind is that the large-scale transition may take place as a comparatively sudden phase change, but only after the ground has been prepared by a prolonged Gramscian "war of position" in civil society. As Jay Ufelder puts it,

> I am now convinced that it's more useful to understand revolutionary situations as an emergent property of complex systems. One of the features of complex systems is the possibility of threshold effects, in which seemingly small perturbations in some of the system's elements suddenly produce large changes in others. The fragility of the system as a whole may be evident (and therefore partially predictable) from some aspects of its structure, but the timing of the revolutionary moment's emergence and the specific form it will take will be impossible to anticipate with any precision.

> In this version of politics, the emergence of rival organizations is as likely to be a consequence of the system's failure as a cause of it.[93]

Although it may be gradual, when processes reach a certain critical mass the overall transition may shift to a cascade.

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92 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude*, xvii-xviii.
93 Jay Ufelder, "ISO Revolution, Organized Opposition Not Req'd," *Dart-Throwing Chimp*, September 7, 2012 <http://dartthrowingchimp.wordpress.com/2012/09/07/iso-revolution-organized-opposition-not-reqd/>.

A whole host of things the Empire's hegemony depends on – Intellectual Property" law, US dollar's reserve currency status, the willingness of Third World states to repay debt, etc. – depends on an imperial mystique based entirely on perceptions. Once the Empire's mojo is called into question, through something analogous to France's humiliation at Dienbienphu and in Algeria, the house of cards will fall pretty fast.[94]

The 500-odd-year-old capitalist system, like previous historic systems,is not a monolithic unity, but a collection of mutually interacting social formations – some in ascendancy, some in decline. It follows that the supplanting of capitalism need not involve a dramatic rupture on the part of a monolithic unity of progressive forces. As Eugene Holland argues,

> the requirement of such a radical systemic break is necessary only when you conceive of a society or mode of production as a total system in the first place.... For if society is actually composed of truly heterogeneous elements that don't form a total system, then a radical systemic break may not be necessary (and may indeed not even be possible, almost by definition). Construing such elements in terms of dominant, residual, and emergent improves utopian prospects considerably, inasmuch as there would presumably be positive elements to affirm (the "emergent" ones) alongside the negative ones to critique and reject (presumably all the "dominant" ones)....[95]

Ultimately the situation is resolved when the forces of the old order attempt – and fail – to thwart the transition.

> ...our current situation is propitious... because the constituent power of the multitude has matured to such an extent that it is becoming able, through its networks of communication and cooperation, through its production of the common, to sustain an alternative democratic society on its own. Here is where the question of time becomes essential. When does the moment of rupture come?... Revolutionary politics must grasp, in the movement of the multitudes and through the accumulation of common and cooperative decisions, the moment of rupture... that can create a new world.[96]

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94 See Heather Marsh, "World War III: A Picture," *Georgie BC*, September 12, 2012 <http://georgiebc.wordpress.com/2012/09/12/world-war-iii-a-picture-and-timeline/>.

95 Holland, *Nomad Citizenship*, p. 169.

96 Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 357.

But however abrupt and dramatic the final rupture may seem, it is only the culmination of a long preexisting process of "building the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

> Following 1640, 1776, 1789, 1848, 1917, and 1949, we have been fixated on the image of revolution – of punctual, violent, wholesale transformation – as the most desirable (and often the only acceptable) mode of social change. But revolution is not the only mode of social transformation: feudalism, for instance, arose piecemeal following the decline of the Roman Empire, in a process that took centuries to complete. Thoroughgoing social change can take place slowly, over countless decades, rather than immediately, in the few months or years of a punctual revolution.... Change therefore doesn't have to happen all at once. Immediate and total social transformation of the revolutionary kind is not absolutely necessary for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that capitalism is not a total system to begin with. Alternatives are not only always possible, they in fact already exist.... Seek out actually existing alternative modes of self-provisioning—they are out there, in Remarkable number and variety—and also develop new ones; walk away from dependence on capital and the State, one step, one stratum, at a time, while at the same time making sure to have and continually develop alternative practices and institutions to sustain the movement. To effectively replace capitalism and the State, a slow-motion general strike must indeed become-general or reach critical mass or bifurcation point eventually, but it doesn't have to be all encompassing right from the beginning or produce wholesale social change all at once: it can start off small and/or scattered and become-general over time (in much the same way that capitalism starts small and gradually becomes-necessary, in Althusser's view).

> Social transformation conceived of in this way renounces what Richard Day has shrewdly identified as the "hegemony of hegemony" – the idea that truly important social change "can only be achieved simultaneously and en masse, across an entire national or supranational space." Hegemonic thinking (i.e., thinking that social change is always and only a matter of hegemony), Day argues, leads to the double impasse of "revolution or reform": given its totalizing view of society, one must either seek the total and utter demolition of that society through revolution or settle for piecemeal reforms that

ultimately have no decisive effect on it. But society is not a totality: it is a contingent assemblage, or assemblage of assemblages. Nomad citizenship thus proposes, in Day's terms, a variety of "small-scale experiments in the construction of alternative modes of social, political and economic organization [as] a way to avoid both waiting forever for the Revolution to come and perpetuating existing structures through reformist demands."....[97]

...[T]he key difference between every ordinary strike and the general strike is that while the former makes demands on capitalist employers, the latter simply steps away from capital altogether and – if it is to succeed – moves in the direction of other form(s) of self-provisioning, enabling the emergence of other form(s) of social life – for example, nomad citizenship and free-market communism.

As a strategy for social change working outside the axiomatic, the slow-motion general strike is, in an Important sense, neither reformist nor revolutionary. It does not employ violence in direct confrontation with the capitalist State and is therefore unlikely to provoke State violence in return, yet neither does it rely on and thereby reinforce the existing practices and institutions of capital and the State. By directing the investment of energy outside the axiomatic, the slow-motion general strike avoids both the retaliatory violence of the state and the extraordinary recuperative capacities of capital....

...[I]n the refusal to work for capital, [the slow-motion general strike] represents a categorical and indeed terminal repudiation of wage slavery. It does not engage in armed conflict and does not make demands: it entails a disengagement from direct confrontation and a refusal of dependency and entreaties, while pointing society in the direction of fundamental social change, nevertheless. But fundamental social change does not have to happen all at once: the general strike as an increasingly widespread movement away from capital and the state toward other forms of self-organization and self-provisioning can take place over an extended period of time – in slow motion, as it were, in a long-term process of the becoming-general of the general strike. Vital to the success of a slow-motion general strike is its sustainability: the unrelenting process of dispossession of capital known as *primitive accumulation* must actually be reversed. For a

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97 Holland, *Nomad Citizenship*, pp. 149-150.

minor marxism, this does not entail the "expropriation of the expropriators" via direct confrontation and violent seizure of the means of production or the State apparatus but rather the identification, exploration, and further development of alternative ways of producing and accessing means of life. Providing access to alternative means of life puts an end to abject dependency on capital, ensuring that the daring step away from capital that initiates the general strike is a sustainable step toward and onto something else.[98]

The Fulcrum of the Present Crisis

Demonstrations and assemblies may be an important part of our struggle. But these, and all other tactics and techniques, must be adopted in accordance with a proper understanding of the nature of the struggle. The most important thing in making this determination is to identify the decisive weak point we need to attack in the present system of power.

Throughout human history, economic exploitation has relied on artificial property rights, on privilege, to erect toll gates between human effort and consumption.

For most of that time, this has taken the form of controlling the physical means of production themselves and then regulating the producing classes access to them. In the pre-modern period, this meant the large-scale absentee ownership of the soil by landed elites of various kinds, and the extraction of tribute from those who actually worked the land.

The Industrial Revolution was a shift in production methods from comparatively cheap, general-purpose, individually owned craft tools to expensive, large-scale, specialized machinery. This was the material basis of wage labor and the factory system. The rich purchased the machinery and hired laborers to work it for them.

In the modern period, since the rise of the centralized state and large-scale industry, most revolutionary struggles have centered on seizing the infrastructure of the existing system: the state apparatus, the factories, etc. The producing classes have had to contest the owning classes' control of the means of production. This necessarily entailed large-scale clashes with the ruling class's enforcement apparatus. Hence a model of revolutionary

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98 *Ibid.*, pp. 155-156.

struggle based on barricades, large-scale demonstrations at centers of power, sitdown strikes and mass pickets, etc.

Today, however, this situation has fundamentally changed. The means of production themselves have been radically cheapened by tech, and in fact a rapidly growing share of the merchandise marketed by global corporations is actually manufactured in small-scale production facilities. So economic exploitation no longer depends on ownership of the means of production.

Because ownership and control of the means of production, in material terms, is coming within reach of the producing classes, economic exploitation no longer requires requires physical control of the means of production, but rather the ability to control our ability to use material means of production within our actual control. It requires restrictive regulations – such as "intellectual property" – on our ability to meet our own needs through voluntary cooperation and self-organization.

Accordingly, today's struggle centers on developing our own means of production and other self-organized, decentralized forms of social organization, in disregard of the corporate state's rules. And it requires means of circumventing the corporate state's means of enforcing these rules.

War of Position Without War of Maneuver. Our fight no longer requires us to contest the ruling class's control of the means of production and state administration, as in previous revolutions, but only to create a society of our own without interference.

Individualist anarchist Katherine Gallagher outlined the strategy in a series of tweets on Twitter:

> For me it's about stretching out our networks of what's possible across borders, about decentralizing... "We" will be transnational, and distributed. We won't be encircled by "them," but woven through their antiquated structures, impossible to quarantine off and finish. I'm not a pacifist. I'm not at all against defensive violence. That's a separate question to me of overthrow. But to oversimplify, when it comes to violence, I want it to be the last stand of a disintegrating order against an emerging order that has already done much of the hard work of

building it's ideals/structures. Not violent revolutionaries sure that their society will be viable, ready to build it, but a society defending itself against masters that no longer rule it. Build the society and defend it, don't go forth with the guns and attempt to bring anarchy about in the rubble.

I think technology is increasingly putting the possibility of meaningful resistance and worker independence within the realm of a meaningful future. So much of the means of our oppression is now more susceptible to being duplicated on a human scale (and so much of patent warfare seems to be aimed at preventing this).

And I think we should be working on how we plan to create a parallel industry that is not held only by those few. More and more the means to keep that industry held only by the few are held in the realm of patent law. It is no longer true that the few own the "lathe" so to speak, nearly as much as they own the patent to it. So we truly could achieve more by creating real alternative manufacture than seizing that built. Yes, there will be protective violence, but it's not as true as it was in the past that there is real necessary means of production in the hands of the few. What they control more now is access to the methods of production and try to prevent those methods being used outside of their watch. Again, I'm not saying that the "last days" of the state won't be marked by violence. But I am saying we now have real tactical options beyond confronting them directly *until* they come to us.[99]

Indeed, when the state brings about the revolutionary rupture by initiating force against the nascent system emerging in its midst, the resulting violence may serve only to ratify the transition after the fact.

In most cases, the work being done to build decentralized systems, will be opaque to the people running the existing system. It won't look like a threat until they have already won (the model for this is how feudalism was replaced by markets – the nobles didn't know they had lost, as an institution, until they lost their castles to creditors).[100]

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99 Paragraph divisions are my own. This string of tweets by Katherine Gallagher (@Zhinxy) in July 2012 was the original inspiration for this paper, which was basically written around it. I also owe her my thanks for first introducing me to privilege, intersectionality and many other concepts discussed in this paper (although it goes without saying she's not responsible for the way I've conveyed—or misconveyed—them).
100 John Robb, "Hypercenteralized or hyperdecentralized? Both…," *Global Guerrillas*, September 19, 2013

Capt. B.H. Liddell-Hart, an apostle of maneuver warfare and the indirect approach, cited Lenin's "vision of fundamental truth" that

> "the soundest strategy in war is to postpone operations until the moral disintegration of the enemy renders the delivery of the mortal blow both possible and easy". This is not always practicable, nor his methods of propaganda always fruitful. But it will bear adaptation – "The soundest strategy in any campaign is to postpone battle and the soundest tactics to postpone attack, until the moral dislocation of the enemy renders the delivery of a decisive blow practicable."[101]

And attempts at transition by revolutionary or insurrectionary means – Gramsci's so-called "War of Maneuver" – tend overwhelmingly to be counterproductive in the modern era.

> Okay, so, the key features of the "war of maneuver" are: speed, limited appeal, and frontal attack. Gramsci makes his arguments via Trotsky's "permanent revolution", George Sorels' general strike, Rosa Luxembourg´s worker insurrection and, particularly, the Leninist power grab. These images of revolutionary change clash, time and again, with European and Western reality: the bloody repression of the Spartacist movement in Germany (1918), the disbanding of worker's councils in Italy during the *Bienno Rosso* (1919-20), and so on. To avert a predictable sense of frustration and to keep actively aspiring to social change, we have to *reimagine revolution*.[102]

Previous struggles, of course, have involved efforts to reduce dependence on the wage system. In the early to mid-19th century, for example, Owenite craft unions set up cooperative shops for independent production by the unemployed, and traded their output with that of other unions using labor notes. But their goal was to win the strikes and go back to work in their old shops on better terms.

And according to John Curl, later attempts by the Knights of Labor to create worker cooperatives foundered on the capitalization requirements.

<http://globalguerrillas.typepad.com/globalguerrillas/2013/09/hypercenteralized-or-hyperdecentralized-both.html>.
101 Liddell-Hart, p. 164.
102 Amador Fernández-Savater, "Strength and Power: Reimagining Revolution," *Guerrilla Translation!*, July 29, 2013 <http://guerrillatranslation.com/2013/07/29/strength-and-power-reimagining-revolution/>.

This struggle is different, in that such economic secessionism is at the heart of it. There's no need for us ever to go back to the capitalists' factories, let alone fight for control of them. We can feed ourselves using intensive cultivation techniques like Permaculture on small amounts of land, and let the giant subsidized agribusiness plantations go back to prairie. We can produce for ourselves in neighborhood garage factories, home microbakeries, unlicensed cab companies, and the like, and let their giant factories full of obsolete machinery turn to rust.

As technological progress makes the physical capital required for production cheaper and cheaper, and brings it back within the realm of ownership by individuals and small cooperative groups – like the craft tools that prevailed before the industrial revolution – the main source of productivity becomes human cooperation itself, and knowledge as a commons.

This means that the rentier classes can no longer extract surplus labor from the population by controlling access to the physical means of production. It must enclose our social relationships themselves as a source of rents.

According to Hardt and Negri, class struggle increasingly takes the form, not of an attempt to storm the physical means of production, but of "exodus" – "a process of subtraction from the relationship with capital by means of actualizing the potential autonomy of labor-power." For the first time in two hundred years, the radical cheapening of physical capital and the primacy of human capital mean that we can adopt a revolutionary strategy that's not based on somehow obtaining control of the ruling class's institutions and concentrations of capital.

In this environment, large-scale demonstrations are still useful. But their purpose is no longer the same as in the cities of Europe in 1848, Petrograd in 1917, or Barcelona in 1936. Their purpose is no longer to organize and fight pitched battles in the process of contesting control of the state and the means of production. Their purpose now is educational: to undermine the legitimacy of the regime in the eyes of the general public, to show people they don't need to be free, and to serve as a giant school and clearing house – in the wonderful phrase of Ralph Borsodi and Mildred Loomis, a "school for living."

Mass and scale, and the seizure of major institutions from the ruling class, are no longer of primary importance. As I wrote elsewhere:

> Our goal is not to assume leadership of existing institutions, but rather to render them irrelevant. We don't want to take over the state or change its policies. We want to render its laws unenforceable. We don't want to take over corporations and make them more "socially responsible." We want to build a counter-economy of open-source information, neighborhood garage manufacturing, Permaculture, encrypted currency and mutual banks, leaving the corporations to die on the vine along with the state. We do not hope to reform the existing order. We intend to serve as its grave-diggers.[103]

David Graeber has been influenced by the same autonomist tradition Hardt and Negri come from. In response to Russell Brand's query about formulating "a centralized revolutionary movement to coordinate transition," he replied:

> well, my own approach is to avoid constituting any sort of new authority, … my dream is to create a thousand autonomous institutions that can gradually take over the business of organizing everyday life, pretty much ignoring the authorities, until gradually the whole apparatus of state comes to seem silly, unnecessary....[104]

This focus on building counter-institutions rather than insurrectionary assault has obvious advantages from a strategic perspective.

A strategy of building the new society within the interstices of the old one has the notable advantage of not presenting large, high-value targets to the enemy. As a character in Kim Stanley Robinson's *2312* argued:

> "Build housing or do land work. Make it that kind of revolution, one of the nonviolent ones. If something happens fast enough they call it a revolution whether guns go off or not."

> "But the guns are there."

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103 Kevin Carson, "Why Import Evgeny Morozov When Tom Franks and Andy Keens are Out of Work??" Center for a Stateless Society, February 14, 2013 <http://c4ss.org/content/17178>.

104 Robert Kirchner, "Russell Brand's Revolution," Center for a Stateless Society, February 24, 2015 <http://c4ss.org/content/36011>.

"Maybe they are, but what if no one dares to shoot them? What if what we did was always too innocuous? Or even invisible?"....

"If you are clear about your intentions, Swan, there will be opposition.... Any change will be opposed. And by serious opposition. I mean violence."

"If they can find the way to apply it. But if there's no one to arrest, no one to beat back, no one to scare..."[105]

The Byzantine general Belisarius's strategic approach – the strategic offensive combined with tactical defensive – was an excellent illustration, by way of military analogy, of Gramsci's War of Position. His reconquest of North Africa, Italy and Spain was, military historian B.H. Liddell-Hart writes,

> the more remarkable because of two features – first, the extraordinarily slender resources with which Belisarius undertook these far-reaching campaigns; second, his consistent use of the tactical defensive. There is no parallel in history for such a series of conquests by abstention from attack. They are the more remarkable since they were carried out by an army that was based on the mobile arm – and mainly composed of cavalry. Belisarius had no lack of audacity, but his tactics were to allow – or tempt – the other side to do the attacking.[106]

> ...Belisarius had developed a new-style tactical instrument with which he knew that he might count on beating much superior numbers, provided that he could induce his opponents to attack him under conditions that suited his tactics. For that purpose his lack of numbers, when not too marked, was an asset, especially when coupled with an audaciously direct strategic offensive. His strategy was thus more psychological than [an attack on the enemy's logistics]. He knew how to provoke the barbarian armies of the West into indulging their natural instinct for direct assault; with the more subtle and skilful Persians he was able at first to take advantage of their feeling of superiority to the Byzantines, and later, when they learnt respect for him, he exploited their wariness as a means of outmaneuvering them psychologically.[107]

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105 Kim Stanley Robinson. *2312* (New York: Orbit Books, 2012), pp. 356, 358.
106 B. H. Liddell-Hart, *Strategy: The Indirect Approach* (New York: Praeger, 1954), pp. 59-60.
107 *Ibid.* p. 72.

Belisarius's combination of a highly mobile strategic offensive and tactical defensive became Byzantine military doctrine for centuries to come.[108]

Gallagher's model for transition from one system to another in the quote above is a perfect illustration of the principle of avoiding direct battle when possible and forcing the enemy to initiate it on unfavorable ground when it does occur. To quote Liddell-Hart again,

> For even if a decisive battle be the goal, the aim of strategy must be to bring about this battle under the most advantageous circumstances. And the more advantageous the circumstances, the less, proportionately, will be the fighting.
>
> The perfection of strategy would be, therefore, to produce a decision without any serious fighting.[109]

If the object of war is really the "destruction of the enemy," that goal is best understood not in terms of physically destroying the enemy's entire army soldier by soldier, but destroying its capabilities. And the best way to achieve that is by rendering the enemy's army practically unusable by creating a strategic situation so advantageous that an attack would obviously be counter-productive.[110]

Clausewitz was correct that the aim of military action is "to disarm the enemy," but incorrect to dismiss the possibility of doing this without "bloodshed" or "great and general battles." And the same is true of revolutionary action. What Clausewitz called "an error which must be extirpated" – the belief that "there is a skillful method of disarming and overcoming the enemy without great bloodshed" – was, Liddell-Hart pointed out, something which "had been regarded as the proper aim of generalship by all the masters of the art of war."[111] "Disarming" means rendering the enemy incapable of achieving victory in regard to a specific end – and hence possibly deterring attack and avoiding battle altogether – by means that include simply occupying a superior position. The difference between being the first to occupy superior ground and then assuming the tactical defensive, and a head-on assault to destroy the enemy physically, is the difference between an alternate history Longstreet occupying Little Round

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108 *Ibid.* p. 73.
109 Liddell-Hart, p. 338.
110 Liddell-Hart, p. 339.
111 *Ibid.* pp. 354-355.

Top on July 1, 1863 and Pickett's Charge. T. E. Lawrence characterized advocates of the latter responses as those "who would rather fight with their arms than with their legs."[112]

The proper goal is "not so much to seek battle as to seek a strategic situation so advantageous that if it does not of itself produce the decision, its continuation by a battle is sure to achieve this"[113] – by a battle, I would add, which is initiated *by the enemy*.

On the other hand, committing prematurely to a particular line of attack renders our own position less advantageous by reducing the number of options that remain open for the future. One of the recurring methods Liddell-Hart points to as an example of the "indirect approach" is pursuing a route of advance that always threatens two or more alternate objectives at the same time; the enemy must divide its defensive forces between them, while the attacker can either decide at the last minute which one of them to concentrate its forces against – or even bypass all defending enemy forces and keep pushing to the rear. A dedicated line of attack, on the other hand, enables the enemy to concentrate its available forces along a known axis.

Applying the same principle to the revolutionary transition, pursuing a strategy of counter-institution building without attempting a decisive frontal assault on the old system has the effect of *creating* alternative objectives, in the sense of leaving the entire system in a state of vulnerability.

Counter-institutions starving the corporate state and engaging in constant, partial disruption will result in incremental state retreat from marginal areas based on cost-benefit ratios, without ever posing enough of a one-time threat to make an all-out counter-assault worth the state's while. The state will simply retreat into smaller and smaller islands of governability.

At the same time, a strategy of counter-institution building is also much more compatible with a prefigurative approach to politics. The demands for insurrectionary conquest of the state and capital are often directly at odds with the kind of successor society we want to build.

It's interesting that Lenin said the working class, left to itself, could only achieve "trade union consciousness." Proletarianization itself in the 19th

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112 T. E. Lawrence, letter to B.H. Liddell-Hart, in *Ibid.* p. 363.
113 Liddell-Hart, p. 365.

century was a powerful force for de-radicalizing the working class. The most radical socialist ideas, as recounted by E.P. Thompson, came from declasse petty bourgeois/skilled artisan elements like master weavers, printers, etc. And syndicalism emerged mainly from master craftsmen on the shop floor, when direct organization of factory work was still carried out under their direction in the gang system.

The industrially organized "army of labor" Marx had so much faith in actually habituated workers to being directed by a hierarchy of labor leaders who were vulnerable to the Iron Law of Oligarchy and cooptation within a reformist labor accord. It also opened the way to deskilling under the 20th century Taylorist/Fordist mass production regime, which eliminated the very bases of independence within the production process from which so much radical/syndicalist thought had been generated. So the proletariat, Marx's own hope for the nucleus of a "historic bloc," was actually rendered capable only of trade union consciousness by the process of proletarianization itself. The most promising way out is deproletarianizing production technology that recreates skilled artisan labor as the nucleus of a new, post-proletarian and post-mass production historic bloc. In which case, as Hardt and Negri suggest, secession will replace conquest of power as the revolutionary model.

Attacking the Enemy's Ability to Fight. As an example of attacking the enemy's ability to respond, Liddell-Hart gives the German *Wehrmacht* (especially in the Spring 1940 campaign):

> While the Allied commanders thought in terms of battle, the new German commanders sought to eliminate it by producing the strategic paralysis of their opponents, using their tanks, dive-bombers, and parachutists to spread confusion and dislocate communications.[114]

To repeat from the previous section, the most useful understanding of "destruction of the enemy's forces" is not the physical destruction of the entire force, down to the last soldier and tank, but the destruction of its ability to function. "…[D]islocation is the aim of strategy; its sequel may be either the enemy's solution or his easier disruption in battle."[115]

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114 *Ibid.* p. 234.
115 *Ibid.* p. 339.

To anticipate our discussion below of the Systempunkt, the destruction of the old capitalist-state system is to be achieved not by the head-on seizure of its commanding heights or its systematic material destruction, but by attacking the critical targets that enable it to function as a coherent system.

Blitzkrieg warfare anticipated in many ways the way networked resistance movements focus on attacking the Systempunkt of the hierarchical enemy rather than attempting to capture or destroy its mass – i.e., to achieve "far better economy of force" by "paralyzing some of its vital organs instead of having to destroy it physically and as a whole by hard fighting."[116]

> The development of air forces offered the possibility of striking at the enemy's economic and moral centres without having first to achieve 'the destruction of the enemy's main forces on the battlefield....
>
> At the same time, the combined development of the petrol motor and the caterpillar track opened up a prospect of developing mechanized land forces of high mobility. This, in turn, foreshadowed a newly enlarged possibility of producing the collapse of "the enemy's main forces" without a serious battle – by cutting their supply lines, dislocating their control-system, or producing paralysis by the sheer nerve-shock of deep penetration into their rear.[117]

The basic principles are as old as Sun Tzu.

> 2. Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.
>
> 3. Thus the highest form of generalship is to balk the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.[118]

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116 *Ibid.* p. 359.

117 *Ibid.* p. 358.

118 Sun Tzu, The Art of War, Chapter Three (Marxists.org online version). Accessed Nov. 21, 2014 <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sun-tzu/works/art-of-war/ch03.htm>.

Liddell-Hart comments:

> In most campaigns the dislocation of the enemy's psychological and physical balance has been the vital prelude to a successful attempt at his overthrow.[119]

The speed and agility of the network, its shortened reaction time, and the rapidity with which it shares information and new techniques, mean that networks are typically inside what strategist John Boyd called the OODA loop of hierarchies.[120] They react more quickly to changing circumstances than do hierarchies, so they can stay a step ahead of them and keep them constantly off-balance. As a result, networks can go through multiple generations of tactical innovation while hierarchies are still ponderously formulating a response to first-generation practices. Organizations that can process new information and make generational changes in praxis in response to that information more quickly outperform those that don't. Boyd biographer Grant Hammond writes:

> Boyd's answer is that we should be open to possibilities, to opportunities and ready and able to recognize choices and make them. It is all a matter of connections and choices. The more we know, the more we connect—to the environment, to the past, the future, to people, to ideas, and to things. In doing so, we have to make choices, to prioritize, to do trade-off thinking about options and possibilities. We also have to embrace novelty, to synthesize, to create opportunities out of the things around us, to be the architect of our own life in so far as possible. For Boyd, living is thinking and creating through endless OODA Loops of various sizes, speeds, and importance.[121]

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119 Liddell-Hart. *Strategy*, p. 25.

120 "...in order to win, we should operate at a *faster tempo or rhythm* than our adversaries—or, better yet, get inside adversary's *Observation-Orientation-Decision-Action time cycle or loop*." John R. Boyd, *Patterns of Conflict* (December 1986), p. 5. The idea is to "Simultaneously compress our time and stretch-out adversary time to generate a *favorable mismatch in time/ability* to shape and adapt to change." One does this by exploiting operations and weapons that "Generate a rapidly changing environment" and at the same time to "Inhibit an adversary's capacity to adapt to such an environment." p. 7. By doing this one may "Render adversary powerless by denying him the opportunity to cope with unfolding circumstances." p. 136.

121 Grant T. Hammond, "The Essential Boyd" October 6, 2006 <https://fasttransients.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/hammond-theessentialboyd1.pdf>.

Boyd called it the Law of Iteration:

> Boyd decided that the primary determinant to winning dogfights was not observing, orienting, planning, or acting better. The primary determinant to winning dogfights was observing, orienting, planning, and acting *faster*. In other words, how quickly one could iterate. *Speed of iteration*, Boyd suggested, *beats quality of iteration*.[122]

Generally, OODA loops become shorter as the "distance" decreases, or friction is reduced (in information terms) between the observation and acting portion of the loop – the actor ideally being empowered to directly implement changes in actions based on her own observation of the results of previous action. Anything that erects barriers between the different sub-processes of the OODA loop – like policy-making procedures within a hierarchy – or impedes feedback will slow down information-processing and reaction.

> Whatever has been planned, there are always unwanted consequences for a reason that has nothing to do with the quality of the research or with the precision of the plan, but with the very nature of action. It has never been the case that you first know and then act. You first act tentatively and then begin to know a bit more before attempting again.[123]

Only successful iterations matter because their successes become the collective property of the entire network. A single network is experiencing – in the sense of benefiting from the experience of – thousands, millions or billions of constant iterations, so that the collective spins off innovations with the speed of replicating yeast, and evolves as fast as a bacteria population developing antibiotic resistance.

A stigmergic network with a short OODA loop that can adopt the benefits of individual nodes' experience evolves in a Lysenkoist manner. In Darwinian evolution, only the most successful individuals live and pass their successful mutations to their own physical offspring. But stigmergic organization means that every individual node that adopts the successful innovation through imitation becomes the "offspring" of the innovator; the

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122 Jeff Atwood, "Boyd's Law of Iteration," *Coding Horror*, February 7, 2007
<http://www.codinghorror.com/blog/2007/02/ boyds-law-of-iteration.html>.
123 Bruno Latour, quoted at *Infotechia* <http://infotechia.com/post/37881756675/whatever-has-been-planned-there-are-always>.

successful mutations generated by individual nodes can immediately be adopted as part of the genetic code of every other node in the network, without the others having to die off. So the network as a whole thrives and grows in response to randomness and volatility – the definition of antifragility.

And getting inside an enemy's OODA loop is closely related to the kinds of disruption and off-balancing that Liddell-Hart referred to above. John Boyd described the effect of degrading an adversary's internal communications:

> He who can generate many non-cooperative centers of gravity magnified friction. Why? Many non-cooperative centers of gravity within a system restrict interaction and adaptability of system with its surroundings, thereby leading to a focus inward (i.e., within itself), which in turn generates confusion and disorder, which impedes vigorous or directed activity, hence, by definition, magnifies friction or entropy.
>
> Any command and control system that forces adherents to look inward, leads to dissolution/disintegration (i.e., system becomes unglued).[124]

As Vinay Gupta argues, there's a close parallel between what networked efforts like Wikileaks want to do to large hierarchical institutions and what George Kennan envisioned the U.S. doing to the USSR. And both are closely connected to Boyd's concept of the OODA loop.

> The idea: there's an information theoretic model of conflict that runs through Kennan, Ogarkov, Boyd, Marshall, Assange. And that it's dominant.
>
> Kennan writes the Long Telegram, thinks the Soviets will collapse because of crap information processing. Ogarkov sees only battle, agrees.
>
> Assange paraphrased "we've become like the Soviets, which was Kennan's greatest fear, and we can beat our governments the same way."[125]

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124 John Boyd "Organic Design for Command and Control" (May 1987), pp. 20-21.

125 Vinay Gupta (as @leashless) on Twitter, 05:42 PM - 09 Feb 13 <https://twitter.com/leashless/status/300298599122731008>; 05:42 PM - 09 Feb 13 <https://twitter.com/leashless/status/300298759433252865>; 05:44 PM - 09

On a more fundamental level, our enemy is not simply slower and less efficient at processing information. It is vulnerable because it *cannot afford* to perceive reality accurately.

The enemy is vulnerable to internal dissension, loss of morale, and a high rate of defection (not to mention internal leaks, sabotage, etc.) among low-level functionaries demoralized by a perpetual war of terror against their own domestic populations. The danger, for the ruling class, is something like the defection of the Winter Palace guards in the Bolshevik Revolution.

Vinay Gupta argues that fighting a networked resistance movement, in the current technological environment, increasingly puts both repressive states and their general populations in a state of cognitive dissonance. This is an edited version of a Twitter chat I had with him:

> **GUPTA:** 1> No national government is capable of planning clearly for the horror of resource wars between China, America and Europe/Russia.
>
> 2> Therefore, other narratives are being created to cover these inevitable economic and standard-of-living conflicts: drug war, terrorism.
>
> 3> This is why so much of the war seems to be huge amounts of money and manpower for totally ineffective results: immoral == blinding self.
>
> The implication is that a moral side – even a smaller one – could out-compete the Great Powers because moral ground = intellectual clarity. The strategic advantage of a moral war is the ability to think clearly about the ends required to meet a genuinely justified end....
>
> Now refactor that through national politics: the government is stupid *because* the government is evil. Clarity would reveal it as such. The implication is, frankly, that you cannot be smart unless you're going to be good, excepting the genuinely evil who know that they are....
>
> This is important, even though it seems simple, because it's *a moral*

Feb 13 <https://twitter.com/leashless/status/ 300299104817389569>.

asymmetry in warfare – it's a reason to believe the good guys do win. In a conflict, the side which can bear to define it's goals clearly can then plot a strategy to attain them. It can win. You can't win a war who's purpose you cannot bear to define: the Americans in Iraq defined fighting with their eyes closed: empire narrative....

Here's my question: can soldiers who do not understand their purpose out-compete those who do? Answer: probably not. Poor strategic thinking....

Because, actually, brainwashing the initiative out of soldiers then trying to breed it back into special forces is *Medieval*, literally. The Thinking War, which is what all high tech war is, requires people who can clearly model why they are fighting to for effective decisions. In a networked environment, if we were going to radically empower individual initiative in war, we'd have to have moral alignment *first*.

What I'm driving at is a moral limitation which command-and-control evolved to get around: wars for the goals of the ruling European classes. And that stuff is all baked into the military, right down to the bone....

In short, a transparent and cooperative battle space is only possible when soldiers individually understand their true purpose and objectives. Because if you feel you're in the wrong, you can't bear to look at the data, and you live in a fantasy world: SNAFU and hierarchy lies.

CARSON: ...Your train of thought suggests fascist regimes can't afford to let their soldiers be smart; they will therefore be defeated by networks. Soldiers fighting for an authoritarian cause have morale trouble from cognitive dissonance, and can't be trusted with initiative. That's the same thing Julian Assange said about hierarchies becoming more brittle and opaque to themselves, in response to attack – wasn't it?

GUPTA: And the side which can bear to face its actions head-on can see the battlespace clearly right down to each individual fighter. The more monitoring and intelligence gear you have, the worse it gets: the intel analysts can't bear to think about what they're seeing. Moral

failure means your front lines get shit information: self-deception is a critical strategic failure which your enemies can exploit.

In short: hit them in their cognitive dissonance. Map it as a strategic asset, and whip ass on it as hard as possible.

What I am suggesting here is simple: TECHNOLOGY EMPOWERS MORAL WAR. I think we may find that it cripples immoral war: evidence is current.

GUPTA [in response to mention of drones by Smari McCarthy @smarimc]: Drone pilots are getting horrible problems... Air Force's number one staffing issue is drone pilots.

Now, imagine the Iraqis and the Afghans had a a vast supply of shoulder-launched anti-aircraft weapons and good quality anti-tank gear. All that stuff is cheap, weapon cost less than 1% of target cost, say. They did this based on RPGs and landmines. Imagine if they'd had kit.

Why? To have effective swarm response, fast, fluid tactics, you need a general consensus on strategy, which comes from political clarity....

Now, let's take this and look at post-economic Greece, Spain and Italy. Italy is city states. Greece and Spain nearly went Anarchist nr WW2. With a moral case for war in those nations, they could be the first testbeds for first world populations fighting for new politics. Shit....

If you just dump the data into a bucket, in a transparent battle space, the moral clarity is what results in coordination at the macro scale. That efficient swarm coordination requires shared goals and common knowledge, and IMMORAL WAR has split goals in the force and secrecy. The battlespace inevitably becomes transparent because the world is turning into one big camera. Even EMP won't do it, in 5 years.

CARSON [after the fact]: Same thing goes for the battlefields at Oakland, UC Davis, NYC. For the first time, the public is forced to confront what that "thin blue line" really does. Moral unity between the public and those sainted "first responders" is disrupted.

GUPTA: ...And that's the core concept: transparent battlespace == local decision-making (hello RTS games) == side with lower cognitive dissonance wins. The idea that the structural stupidity of the immoral force would be revealed to its own fighters by its own software seems to be new....

Conclusion: a shared, rational moral reason for war is an essential part of winning in a transparent battlespace because it enables thinking. And particularly in urban environments, the pace of war requires decision-making to be done as far forwards as possible, and in teams.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsNLbK8_rBY multiplied by every team plugged into the battle computers, looking at the carnage wrought, in short....

It also suggests that, in high flux environments, the better trained side will lose because *they're better at doing what they're told.*

Tech provides coordination, which makes Just Following Orders a less adaptive response than looking at the map and acting. Power shift.

In short, when the Army is no longer a Will-Multiplier for a Strong Center, but a self-service collective defense system, it works different. That's actually the key, right there: the military was constructed to magnify the will of a Sovereign, and when that breaks down, boom. Because a sufficiently transparent society, or battlespace, highlights the conflicts of interest between Sovereigns and Soldiers.

...Under those circumstances, a sort of Digital Swiss Model – cooperative, networked hedgehog defense integrated to the political level wins. Your cadres vote on procurement, on recruitment, and on mission, and it carries fluidly right into the urban conflict environment...

In short, for exactly the same reason Communism was out-competed by Capitalism, Networked societies will out-compete Capitalist ones. It's only the unified moral basis which allows for a networked fighting force to find effective unity: without that, transparency tears apart.

I keep saying it in different ways: when everybody can see everything, the goal of transparent battlespace, the good guys tend to win. Because what I'm saying here is very simple: the Americans are

probably going to be the Bad Guys on the next outing. #NDAA

And I think it's important to understand their failings in Iraq and Afghanistan as being optimistic signs for global Liberty. Learn & repeat.

Conclusion of conclusion: there is a decent chance that Netwar will cripple American offensive capability in unjust wars due to moral loss…. To fight on a high tech platform is going to require a fundamental *political* rethink, rebuilding command-and-control from first principles. And in that process, we might discover an effective, population-led decision-making process to replace our broken electoral democracies.

War, by the people, for the people, and of the people must be the inevitable consequence of transparency on the battle field. Because, to win, the left hand must know what the right hand is doing, and the right hand is stuffing money down Dick Cheney's pants….

And now for some scholarship: the classic "Why Arabs Lose Wars" www.meforum.org/441/why-arabs-lose-wars – it's this but for our own nation state militaries.[126]

The effect on hierarchies' internal communications is much like John Boyd described in informational terms earlier in this chapter. In fact Boyd himself referred to a similar effect in moral warfare:

Physically we can *isolate* our adversaries by severing their communications with outside world as well as by severing their internal communications to one another….

Morally our adversaries *isolate* themselves when they visibly improve their well-being to the detriment of others… by violating codes of conduct or behavior patterns that they profess to uphold or others expect them to uphold.[127]

Such contradictions within ourselves "destroy our internal harmony" and "paralyze us."[128]

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126 Kevin Carson, "Vinay Gupta: The Authoritarian Cause Will Be Defeated by Its Own Cognitive Dissonance," *P2P Foundation Blog*, January 17, 2012 <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/vinay-gupta-the-authoritarian-cause-will-be-defeated-by-its-own-cognitive-dissonance/2012/01/17>.

127 John Boyd, "The Strategic Game of ? and ?" (June 1987)," p. 47

128 *Ibid.* p. 55.

Compare this to the dialogue between Shevek and Atro in Ursula LeGuin's *The Dispossessed* on why hierarchical command-and-control was needed in the military forces of the class state:

> Atro had once explained to him how this was managed, how the sergeants could give the privates orders, how the lieutenants could give the privates and the sergeants orders, how the captains... and so on and so on up to the generals, who could give everyone else orders and need take them from none, except the commander in chief. Shevek had listened with incredulous disgust. "You call that organization?" he had inquired. "You even call it discipline? But it is neither. It is a coercive mechanism of extraordinary inefficiency–a kind of seventh-millennium steam engine! With such a rigid and fragile structure what could be done that was worth doing?" This had given Atro a chance to argue the worth of warfare as the breeder of courage and manliness and weeder-out of the unfit, but the very line of his argument had forced him to concede the effectiveness of guerrillas, organized from below, self-disciplined. "But that only works when the people think they're fighting for something of their own–you know, their homes, or some notion or other," the old man had said. Shevek had dropped the argument. He now continued it, in the darkening basement among the stacked crates of unlabeled chemicals. He explained to Atro that he now understood why the Army was organized as it was. It was indeed quite necessary. No rational form of organization would serve the purpose. He simply had not understood that the purpose was to enable men with machine guns to kill unarmed men and women easily and in great quantities when told to do so.

Hierarchical systems of domination cannot trust their members with the discretion to put their own knowledge and skill to full use. Therefore, the organization as a whole does not know what it knows. It is less than the sum of its parts. Conversely, the self-organized network is more than the sum of its parts.

So what are the critical junctures—the chokepoints—involved in the present struggle between the old corporate-state capitalist system and its networked successor?

Our Limiting Factor: Unequal Distribution of Knowledge. An Occupy Oakland activist, Emily Loftis, critiqued the high-tech approach to counterinstitution-building by saying, "people that need these resources and networks the most have no/little access to these forms of tech."

That's true. The most exploited populations, both within the United States and the West and in the world as a whole, have generally had the least exposure to the new technologies of abundance. And the distribution of technical knowledge, far too often, parallels the distribution of economic and racial privilege.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that these technologies have fundamentally shifted the nature of struggle. Rather than accumulating the massive amounts of capital required to undertake old-style forms of production, or organizing to assault and capture the large institutions that control such accumulations of capital, the proliferation of means of production that are two orders of magnitude cheaper means that our task now is primarily to spread the knowledge and technical skill required to operate such machinery. As material problems go, this is a much better one to have.

The primary obstacle to the rapid diffusion of low-cost means of production, and the creation of low-capital and low-overhead local economies, is not the physical cost of the capital. It is far less costly in material terms for a marginalized population to scrape up the few hundred dollars each it would take to build a fully-equipped garage factory, community farm and Internet cafe, than to fight a struggle for the control of industry or the state.

The two primary obstacles – or choke points – are 1) the diffusion of knowledge of the technique itself, and 2) the state's enforcement capability. And it is mainly here that oppression constitutes an impediment to marginalized communities benefiting from the new technologies and means of communication.

People from a middle or upper-middle class background, even those who live a comparatively threadbare existence on as little actual cash income as members of the underclass, have the social and cultural capital that comes with their class background. Even when they lack cash, they have a knowledge of where to look for quality stuff cheap, and how to use it, that makes possible a form of genteel poverty unavailable to those from a less privileged background. Their familiarity with the technology, and with forms

of alternative economic practice normally identified with middle class intellectuals, often enable them to build a comfortable life with centered on quality used goods and salvaged electronics, even with very low expenditures of actual money.

> ...although it's true that one can get second-hand hardware for free and install FOSS on it, this overlooks the fact that doing so often tends to require middle-class privileges.
>
> As i noted above, my own middle-class background enabled me to develop a certain level of literacy, and an idiolect, which in turn enabled me to relatively easily obtain skilled work, which in turn enabled me to purchase (good quality, but expensive) O'Reilly and Associates books, which in turn enabled me to develop skills in programming and system administration, which in turn has allowed me to set up several FOSS-based LANs for my extended family on the cheap, using second-hand software provided to me gratis by people whose workplace was planning to throw them on the garbage heap (Flexibeast, "Middle-classism," Dec.11, 2011 http://flexibeast. dreamwidth.org /129347.html).

The Crimethinc Ex-Workers Collective similarly wrote that:

> Money and property are not the only things that people inherit. Wealthy families pass on social skills and networks, accents and vocabularies, influential family names and relationships with institutions- a college that receives sizable donations is more likely to admit the offspring of alumni, no matter how dumb they are. Just as wealthy white Americans can inherit all these advantages and white privilidge besides, African-Americans inherit long term effects of slavery and segregation, of their ancestors being terrorized and their families struggling to compete in a racist society. The same goes for children of indigenous people, of refugees, of immigrants, of all the exploited and excluded. ("Work: Capitalism. Economics. Resistance")

So although comparative material poverty, in monetary terms, no doubt contributes to marginalized communities' lack of access to new technologies of abundance, that factor is nevertheless secondary to the lack of cultural capital and knowledge.

The central chokepoint, in building our new society, is becoming less and less money capital or material resources, and more and more the diffusion of knowledge and technique. And as Loftis pointed out, the cultural capital of technological knowledge is a form of class, as well as racial and gender, privilege; the lack of access to such knowledge and familiarity with the technology is a legacy of oppression.

But to repeat, the diffusion of knowledge and technique is far cheaper than the conquest or accumulation of material resources. People are pretty damned smart, even when they lack conventional learning or even basic literacy. Just look at the experiments where laptops were left for rural African children to find, whereupon those children – free to experiment and follow their curiosity without adult interference – quickly taught themselves to use them. What matters, in successful learning, is that the learner feel she is in control of the process, and pursuing it for her own ends based on the problems she feels a need to address in her own life (this was the approach Paulo Freire took towards teaching basic literacy and learning skills to illiterate adults).

When the material resources themselves are cheapening by orders of magnitude, and the main obstacle to their universal adoption is the lack of knowledge of how to do so, it becomes clear that our primary revolutionary task is to promote the spread of the technologies of abundance, and new networked means of self-organization, into the communities that need them most: the marginalized and oppressed.

The concept of intersectionality is a useful tool for understanding the problem we confront together in the struggle for justice. Intersectionality is not, as it is commonly parodied, an "Oppression Olympics" in which marginalized groups engage in one-upmanship over who's the most oppressed of all. Rather, it's a tool for analysis *within* social movements to determine who most needs extra help.

> intersectionality was not "invented" (if you will) as a way to understand "privilege." It was created as a way to make varying communities visible *and create justice* accordingly.

> ...in our community, we've decided that desegregation is the way to address inequality. but if we shift our lens to look at the needs of a black woman who is pregnant and poor—will desegregation help her?

or does she need a different solution? Or a more complicated solution? like desegregation *and* the creation of local economies that she can more easily survive in?

intersectionality at its *core* is about *justice* – and that focus on justice means that it is organically focusing on solutions through making the multiple needs of shifting communities visible – and recognizing that one person is a part of multiple communities all at the same time.

it existed as a critique of and a solution to almost every single leftist "movement" in the US – which almost universally focused on one single solution as the answer to injustice for all (think: ending patriarchy as the solution for feminists, desegregation as the solution for the black community, destroying capitalism as the solution for the white community, ending slavery as the solution for abolitionists, etc)

intersectionality at its *core* is one of the only movement based theories that recognizes that the US is something that can not be reformed. we need to build something new. and to build something new, we need to build something that has space to make the needs of all of our communities visible and *important.*[129]

The struggle against the corporate state and Empire, and the struggles for racial and gender justice ("social justice") are not in a zero-sum relationship with one another. They are complementary and cumulative. It is not a distraction from the racial and gender justice struggle to put a special focus on the needs of the economically oppressed. It is not a distraction or detraction from the struggle for economic justice to address the needs of workers of color or of women, gay and transgender workers. Just the opposite. It creates a positive synergy.

Treating the relationship between these struggles as zero-sum undermines each one severally. Treating them as mutually reinforcing, as natural allies in a larger fight for justice, on the other hand, creates a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

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129 machamechamama, *mmmightymightypeople*, July 19, 2012 <http://mmmightymightypeople.tumblr.com/post/27591904256/intersectionality-was-not-invented-if-you-will>.

That's what intersectionality is all about: paying attention to the way that intersecting membership in more than one oppressed group. It's just the opposite of the "oppression olympics" it's frequently dismissed as. Intersectionality is not a source of division, but of unity. The idea of intersectionality is to strengthen each movement internally and create solidarity, by considering the special needs of each member and giving her whatever help she needs to function effectively as a comrade in the struggle. It eliminates potential divisions within the movement that might otherwise be used as a weapon by its enemies.

Differential levels of oppression and exploitation are a lever for maintaining the system of exploitation by the privileged classes. An economic justice movement that fights for the rights and empowerment of workers, without specifically addressing the special needs of the victims of racial and gender oppression in its ranks, is a gravely weakened and divided movement.

Access to underpaid and exploited minority, female and unskilled labor undermines the bargaining power of white, male, skilled labor. Industrial managers in early 20th century labor struggles, who deliberately chose unemployed blacks as scabs to break strikes, understood this. So did big farmers in the South who exploited racial divisions to break the tenant farmers' union. So, on the other side, did the Wobblies and CIO, who eschewed the racial segregation that so weakened the AFL's craft unions.

Intersectionality undermines the ruling class's "divide and conquer" strategies of labor market segmentation as a strategy for weakening the bargaining power of labor. The workers' movement, as such, by giving additional aid to the most disadvantaged and oppressed segment of the labor force, increases the power of labor as a whole.

In a very real sense, intersectionality and stigmergy are complementary approaches. The best form of solidarity, arguably, is the "Hundred Flowers" approach of many different little movements seeking their own goals based on their subjective experience of where the shoe pinches—but approaching other movements with an attitude of listening rather than talking, and offering whatever help and support they have to give in the course of their own struggles. As Melanie Pinkert puts it:

I think we should stop trying to have big tents. We need to focus on understanding our interests and how they connect. We should be building small, close-knit groups and a lot of little bridges.

In other words, stop seeing different experiences, backgrounds, and struggles as divisive and start seeing them as connective. Blag Hag is a bridge between feminists and atheists. Not all atheists are going to examine their other privileges. Not all feminists are going to examine theirs. But many will understand. That bridge is the beginning of how we are going to stop throwing each other under the bus.

We don't need to worry that our movements will be divided. Large organizations only erase differences that shouldn't be erased and grow hierarchies that shouldn't be seeded. Successful social movements of the past have usually been made up of small, tight-knit communities and groups. They have been made up of people with long relationships and a lot of earned trust and respect. It wasn't a thousand people who started the freedom rides. It was a handful. But that handful sparked something and others followed.

I think it is o.k. if we work on the issues that most affect us and with people that we like, understand, and respect. But we all have to take on the work of pushing to understand how the struggles are connected. And we have to make sure that we aren't taking the easy way out by avoiding the uncomfortableness that comes from working with people whose cultures, experiences, marginalizations, etc. are difficult for us. We need to constantly be confronting ourselves.

The good news is that most of us are a part of many communities and struggles. So we can all be bridges. We can all work on the things that most affect us. We can all help each other to understand how those struggles are connected. We can work towards the same thing from different angles. Our work will be stronger for it.[130]

All over the world, people are busy creating the building blocks of the successor society. Open Source Ecology, with its Factor e Farm demo site near Kansas City, is developing an Global Village Construction Set of fifty-odd tools: cheap, open-source desktop micromanufacturing machinery,

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130 Melanie Pinkert, "Big Tents, Little Bridges, Vested Interests," Broadsnark, August 24, 2012 <http://www.broadsnark.com/big-tents-little-bridges-vested-interests/>.

tractors and earthmoving equipment, a compressed-earth block press, generators, sawmills – capable of comfortably supporting a village economy of hundreds of people for a few tens of thousands of dollars worth of equipment. Digital barter currencies. Permaculture can feed people on very small land areas, working in harmony with local microclimates rather than relying on expensive inputs of fertilizer and irrigation; John Jeavons, with his raised bed techniques, can feed one person on a tenth of an acre. Encrypted currency systems, operating under cover of darknets, can facilitate exchange between local producers even when the larger economy is plagued by idle resources for want of "enough money in circulation."

Similarly, we've decided that the spread of liberatory technologies and the means of living comfortably in our own autonomous economies is the way to address economic exploitation. But if we shift our lens to look at the most economically disadvantaged, people of color, and women, will these technologies help them without any further action to make them accessible? Or something more complex like technologies of liberation *and* extra, targeted efforts to integrate them into marginalized communities?

But the people engaged in such projects are disproportionately white, educated, middle class. Need for alliance with poor people's movements, open-source education projects, etc., in areas like Cleveland, Detroit, and Third World countries. Community learning projects, in alliance with school shop classes, machine shops willing to conduct apprenticeship programs, seeding Fab Labs and hackerspaces, providing technical support for setting up barter currencies, etc.

As Stephen Biko said, "the most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." But the converse is also true: a freed mind is the most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressed.

The State's Systempunkt: Enforcement.
Each day's news demonstrates the futility of attempts at legislative reform, compared to direct action to make the laws unenforceable. The principle was stated most effectively by Charles Johnson:

> If you put all your hope for social change in legal reform … then … you will find yourself outmaneuvered at every turn by those who have the deepest pockets and the best media access and the tightest connections. There is no hope for turning this system against them;

because, after all, the system was made for them and the system was made by them. Reformist political campaigns inevitably turn out to suck a lot of time and money into the politics—with just about none of the reform coming out on the other end.[131]

Far greater success can be achieved, at a tiny fraction of the cost, by "bypassing those laws and making them irrelevant to your life."

Johnson wrote in the immediate context of copyright law. In response to an anti-copyright blogger who closed up shop in despair over the increasingly draconian nature of copyright law, he pointed to the state's imploding ability to enforce such laws. The DRM of popular music and movie content is typically cracked within hours of its release, and it becomes freely available for torrent download. Ever harsher surveillance by ISPs in collusion with content "owners" is countered by the use of anonymizers and proxies. And the all-pervasive "anti-songlifting" curriculum in the publik skools, in today's youth culture, is met with the same incredulous hilarity as a showing of "Reefer Madness" to a bunch of potheads.

The weakest link in any legal regime, no matter how repressive on paper, is its enforcement.

According to John Robb, to disrupt centralized, hierarchical systems, it's not necessary to take over or destroy even a significant portion of their infrastructures. It's simply necessary to destroy the most vulnerable of their key nodes and render the overall system non-functional.

These vulnerable, high-value nodes are what Robb calls the "systempunkt." It's a concept borrowed from German blitzkrieg doctrine. The "schwerpunkt" was the most vulnerable point in an enemy's defenses, on which an offensive should concentrate most of its force in order to achieve a breakthrough. Once this small portion of the enemy's forces was destroyed, the rest could be bypassed and encircled without direct engagement.

Likewise, to disrupt centralized, hierarchical systems, it's not necessary to take over or destroy even a significant portion of their infrastructures. Actually capturing the bulk of a system's infrastructure would be

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131 Charles Johnson, "Counter-economic Optimism," *Rad Geek People's Daily*, Feb. 7, 2009 <http://radgeek.com/gt/2009/02/07/countereconomic_optimism/>.

enormously costly – quite possibly costing the attacker more than it would cost the enemy in economic damage. It's simply necessary to destroy the most vulnerable of their key nodes and render the overall system non-functional. A few thousand dollars spent by Al Qaeda incapacitating several nodes in a gas or oil pipeline system can result in disruption that costs billions in economic damage from fuel shortages and spikes in prices.

We can apply these lessons to our own movement to supplant the corporate state. Conventional Leftist models of revolution, as well as "progressive" models of reform politics, aim at taking over the state's policy apparatus and using it to implement one's own goals. But taking over the state through conventional politics is enormously costly.

To a certain extent, from the perspective of the interests in control of the corporate state, the state itself *is* the systempunkt – if, that is, you start out with enough money to make seizing the key node a realistic possibility, and you need the kind of functions that only a state can perform. The economic ruling class needs a state because the very nature of a ruling class requires coercive monopoly. And from that perspective, capturing the state is cost-effective. A large corporation may donate a few hundred thousands to campaign funds or spend a similar amount hiring lobbyists, and in return secure billions in corporate welfare or regulatory benefits from the state.

But from our standpoint, that's out of the question. Victory in conventional politics means we have to outcompete billionaires in a bidding war to control the state, and outdo them in navigating the rules of a policy-making process that their money already controls. The odds of carrying that off are about the same as the odds of beating the house in Vegas. You have to outcompete the RIAA in influencing "intellectual property" law, ADM and Cargill in setting USDA policy, the insurance industry in setting healthcare policy – and so on, ad nauseam.