

# EMPIRE

Michael Hardt

Antonio Negri

**HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS**

Cambridge, Massachusetts

London, England

and the impossibility of traditional forms of struggle, but this is not the end of the story. As the old sites and forms of struggle decline, new and more powerful ones arise. The spectacle of imperial order is not an ironclad world, but actually opens up the real possibility of its overturning and new potentials for revolution.

### 3.6

## CAPITALIST SOVEREIGNTY, OR ADMINISTERING THE GLOBAL SOCIETY OF CONTROL

As long as society is founded on money we won't have enough of it.

Leaflet, Paris strike, December 1995

This is the abolition of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production itself, and hence a self-abolishing contradiction, which presents itself *prima facie* as a mere point of transition to a new form of production.

Karl Marx

Capital and sovereignty might well appear to be a contradictory coupling. Modern sovereignty relies fundamentally on the *transcendence* of the sovereign—be it the Prince, the state, the nation, or even the People—over the social plane. Hobbes established the spatial metaphor of sovereignty for all modern political thought in his unitary Leviathan that rises above and overarches society and the multitude. The sovereign is the surplus of power that serves to resolve or defer the crisis of modernity. Furthermore, modern sovereignty operates, as we have seen in detail, through the creation and maintenance of fixed boundaries among territories, populations, social functions, and so forth. Sovereignty is thus also a surplus of code, an overcoding of social flows and functions. In other words, sovereignty operates through the striation of the social field.

Capital, on the contrary, operates on the plane of *immanence*, through relays and networks of relationships of domination, without reliance on a transcendent center of power. It tends historically to destroy traditional social boundaries, expanding across territories and enveloping always new populations within its processes. Capital functions, according to the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari, through a generalized decoding of fluxes, a massive deterritorialization, and then through conjunctions of these deterritorialized and decoded fluxes.<sup>1</sup> We can understand the functioning of capital as deterritorializing and immanent in three primary aspects that Marx himself analyzed. First, in the processes of primitive accumulation, capital separates populations from specifically coded territories and sets them in motion. It clears the Estates and creates a "free" proletariat. Traditional cultures and social organizations are destroyed in capital's tireless march through the world to create the networks and pathways of a single cultural and economic system of production and circulation. Second, capital brings all forms of value together on one common plane and links them all through money, their general equivalent. Capital tends to reduce all previously established forms of status, title, and privilege to the level of the cash nexus, that is, to quantitative and commensurable economic terms. Third, the laws by which capital functions are not separate and fixed laws that stand above and direct capital's operations from on high, but historically variable laws that are immanent to the very functioning of capital: the laws of the rate of profit, the rate of exploitation, the realization of surplus value, and so forth.

Capital therefore demands not a transcendent power but a mechanism of control that resides on the plane of immanence. Through the social development of capital, the mechanisms of modern sovereignty—the processes of coding, overcoding, and recoding that imposed a transcendent order over a bounded and segmented social terrain—are progressively replaced by an *axiomatic*: that is, a set of equations and relationships that determines and combines variables and coefficients immediately and equally across

various terrains without reference to prior and fixed definitions or terms.<sup>2</sup> The primary characteristic of such an axiomatic is that relations are prior to their terms. In other words, within an axiomatic system, postulates "are not propositions that can be true or false, since they contain relatively indeterminate *variables*. Only when we give these variables particular values, or in other words, when we substitute constants for them, do the postulates become propositions, true or false, according to the constants chosen."<sup>3</sup> Capital operates through just such an axiomatic of propositional functions. The general equivalence of money brings all elements together in quantifiable, commensurable relations, and then the immanent laws or equations of capital determine their deployment and relation according to the particular constants that are substituted for the variables of the equations. Just as an axiomatic destabilizes any terms and definitions prior to the relations of logical deduction, so too capital sweeps clear the fixed barriers of precapitalist society—and even the boundaries of the nation-state tend to fade into the background as capital realizes itself in the world market. Capital tends toward a smooth space defined by uncoded flows, flexibility, continual modulation, and tendential equalization.<sup>4</sup>

The transcendence of modern sovereignty thus conflicts with the immanence of capital. Historically, capital has relied on sovereignty and the support of its structures of right and force, but those same structures continually contradict in principle and obstruct in practice the operation of capital, finally obstructing its development. The entire history of modernity that we have traced thus far might be seen as the evolution of the attempts to negotiate and mediate this contradiction. The historical process of mediation has been not an equal give and take, but rather a one-sided movement from sovereignty's transcendent position toward capital's plane of immanence. Foucault traces this movement in his analysis of the passage in European rule between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from "sovereignty" (an absolute form of sovereignty centralized in the will and person of the Prince) and "governmentality" (a form

of sovereignty expressed through a decentralized economy of rule and management of goods and populations).<sup>5</sup> This passage between forms of sovereignty coincides importantly with the early development and expansion of capital. Each of the modern paradigms of sovereignty indeed supports capital's operation for a specific historical period, but at the same time they pose obstacles to capital's development that eventually have to be overcome. This evolving relationship is perhaps the central problematic to be confronted by any theory of the capitalist state.

Civil society served for one historical period as mediator between the immanent forces of capital and the transcendent power of modern sovereignty. Hegel adopted the term "civil society" from his reading of British economists, and he understood it as a mediation between the self-interested endeavors of a plurality of economic individuals and the unified interest of the state. Civil society mediates between the (immanent) Many and the (transcendent) One. The institutions that constitute civil society functioned as passageways that channel flows of social and economic forces, raising them up toward a coherent unity and, flowing back, like an irrigation network, distribute the command of the unity throughout the immanent social field. These non-state institutions, in other words, organized capitalist society under the order of the state and in turn spread state rule throughout society. In the terms of our conceptual framework, we might say that civil society was the terrain of the becoming-immanent of modern state sovereignty (down to capitalist society) and at the same time inversely the becoming-transcendent of capitalist society (up to the state).

In our times, however, civil society no longer serves as the adequate point of mediation between capital and sovereignty. The structures and institutions that constitute it are today progressively withering away. We have argued elsewhere that this withering can be grasped clearly in terms of the decline of the dialectic between the capitalist state and labor, that is, in the decline of the effectiveness and role of labor unions, the decline of collective bargaining with labor, and the decline of the representation of labor in the constitu-

tion.<sup>6</sup> The withering of civil society might also be recognized as concomitant with the passage from disciplinary society to the society of control (see Section 2.6). Today the social institutions that constitute disciplinary society (the school, the family, the hospital, the factory), which are in large part the same as or closely related to those understood as civil society, are everywhere in crisis. As the walls of these institutions break down, the logics of subjectification that previously operated within their limited spaces now spread out, generalized across the social field. The breakdown of the institutions, the withering of civil society, and the decline of disciplinary society all involve a smoothing of the striation of modern social space. Here arise the networks of the society of control.<sup>7</sup>

With respect to disciplinary society and civil society, the society of control marks a step toward the plane of immanence. The disciplinary institutions, the boundaries of the effectivity of their logics, and their striation of social space all constitute instances of verticality or transcendence over the social plane. We should be careful, however, to locate where exactly this transcendence of disciplinary society resides. Foucault was insistent on the fact, and this was the brilliant core of his analysis, that the exercise of discipline is absolutely immanent to the subjectivities under its command. In other words, discipline is not an external voice that dictates our practices from on high, overarching us, as Hobbes would say, but rather something like an inner compulsion indistinguishable from our will, immanent to and inseparable from our subjectivity itself. The institutions that are the condition of possibility and that define spatially the zones of effectivity of the exercise of discipline, however, do maintain a certain separation from the social forces produced and organized. They are in effect an instance of sovereignty, or rather a point of mediation with sovereignty. The walls of the prison both enable and limit the exercise of carceral logics. They differentiate social space.

Foucault negotiates with enormous subtlety this distance between the transcendent walls of the institutions and the immanent exercise of discipline through his theories of the *dispositif* and the

diagram, which articulate a series of stages of abstraction.<sup>8</sup> In somewhat simplified terms, we can say that the *dispositif* (which is translated as either mechanism, apparatus, or deployment) is the general strategy that stands behind the immanent and actual exercise of discipline. Carceral logic, for example, is the unified *dispositif* that oversees or subtends—and is thus abstracted and distinct from—the multiplicity of prison practices. At a second level of abstraction, the *diagram* enables the deployments of the disciplinary *dispositif*. For example, the carceral architecture of the panopticon, which makes inmates constantly visible to a central point of power, is the diagram or virtual design that is actualized in the various disciplinary *dispositifs*. Finally, the institutions themselves instantiate the diagram in particular and concrete social forms as well. The prison (its walls, administrators, guards, laws, and so forth) does not rule its inmates the way a sovereign commands its subjects. It creates a space in which inmates, through the strategies of carceral *dispositifs* and through actual practices, *discipline themselves*. It would be more precise to say, then, that the disciplinary institution is not itself sovereign, but its abstraction from or transcendence above the social field of the production of subjectivity constitutes the key element in the exercise of sovereignty in disciplinary society. Sovereignty has become virtual (but it is for that no less real), and it is actualized always and everywhere through the exercise of discipline.

Today the collapse of the walls that delimited the institutions and the smoothing of social striation are symptoms of the flattening of these vertical instances toward the horizontality of the circuits of control. The passage to the society of control does not in any way mean the end of discipline. In fact, the immanent exercise of discipline—that is, the self-disciplining of subjects, the incessant whisperings of disciplinary logics within subjectivities themselves—is extended even more generally in the society of control. What has changed is that, along with the collapse of the institutions, the disciplinary *dispositifs* have become less limited and bounded spatially in the social field. Carceral discipline, school discipline, factory discipline, and so forth interweave in a hybrid production

of subjectivity. In effect, in the passage to the society of control, the elements of transcendence of disciplinary society decline while the immanent aspects are accentuated and generalized.

The immanent production of subjectivity in the society of control corresponds to the axiomatic logic of capital, and their resemblance indicates a new and more complete compatibility between sovereignty and capital. The production of subjectivity in civil society and disciplinary society did in a certain period further the rule and facilitate the expansion of capital. The modern social institutions produced social identities that were much more mobile and flexible than the previous subjective figures. The subjectivities produced in the modern institutions were like the standardized machine parts produced in the mass factory: the inmate, the mother, the worker, the student, and so forth. Each part played a specific role in the assembled machine, but it was standardized, produced en masse, and thus replaceable with any part of its type. At a certain point, however, the fixity of these standardized parts, of the identities produced by the institutions, came to pose an obstacle to the further progression toward mobility and flexibility. The passage toward the society of control involves a production of subjectivity that is not fixed in identity but hybrid and modulating. As the walls that defined and isolated the effects of the modern institutions progressively break down, subjectivities tend to be produced simultaneously by numerous institutions in different combinations and doses. Certainly in disciplinary society each individual had many identities, but to a certain extent the different identities were defined by different places and different times of life: one was mother or father at home, worker in the factory, student at school, inmate in prison, and mental patient in the asylum. In the society of control, it is precisely these places, these discrete sites of applicability, that tend to lose their definition and delimitations. A hybrid subjectivity produced in the society of control may not carry the identity of a prison inmate or a mental patient or a factory worker, but may still be constituted simultaneously by all of their logics. It is factory worker outside the factory, student outside school, inmate outside prison,

insane outside the asylum—all at the same time. It belongs to no identity and all of them—outside the institutions but even more intensely ruled by their disciplinary logics.<sup>9</sup> Just like imperial sovereignty, the subjectivities of the society of control have mixed constitutions.

### A Smooth World

In the passage of sovereignty toward the plane of immanence, the collapse of boundaries has taken place both within each national context and on a global scale. The withering of civil society and the general crisis of the disciplinary institutions coincide with the decline of nation-states as boundaries that mark and organize the divisions in global rule. The establishment of a global society of control that smooths over the striae of national boundaries goes hand in hand with the realization of the world market and the real subsumption of global society under capital.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, imperialism contributed to capital's survival and expansion (see Section 3.1). The partition of the world among the dominant nation-states, the establishment of colonial administrations, the imposition of trade exclusives and tariffs, the creation of monopolies and cartels, differentiated zones of raw material extraction and industrial production, and so forth all aided capital in its period of global expansion. Imperialism was a system designed to serve the needs and further the interests of capital in its phase of global conquest. And yet, as most of the (communist, socialist, and capitalist) critics of imperialism have noted, imperialism also from its inception conflicted with capital. It was a medicine that itself threatened the life of the patient. Although imperialism provided avenues and mechanisms for capital to pervade new territories and spread the capitalist mode of production, it also created and reinforced rigid boundaries among the various global spaces, strict notions of inside and outside that effectively blocked the free flow of capital, labor, and goods—thus necessarily precluding the full realization of the world market.

Imperialism is a machine of global striation, channeling, coding, and territorializing the flows of capital, blocking certain flows

and facilitating others. The world market, in contrast, requires a smooth space of uncoded and deterritorialized flows. This conflict between the striation of imperialism and the smooth space of the capitalist world market gives us a new perspective that allows us to reconsider Rosa Luxemburg's prediction of capitalist collapse: "Though imperialism is the historical method for prolonging the career of capitalism, it is also the sure means of bringing it to a swift conclusion."<sup>10</sup> The international order and striated space of imperialism did indeed serve to further capitalism, but it eventually became a fetter to the deterritorializing flows and smooth space of capitalist development, and ultimately it had to be cast aside. Rosa Luxemburg was essentially right: *imperialism would have been the death of capital had it not been overcome*. The full realization of the world market is necessarily the end of imperialism.

The decline of the power of nation-states and the dissolution of the international order bring with them the definitive end of the effectiveness of the term "Third World." One could tell this story as a very simple narrative. The term was coined as the complement to the bipolar cold war division between the dominant capitalist nations and the major socialist nations, such that the Third World was conceived as what was outside this primary conflict, the free space or frontier over which the first two worlds would compete. Since the cold war is now over, the logic of this division is no longer effective. This is true, but the neat closure of this simple narrative fails to account for the real history of the term in its important uses and effects.

Many argued, beginning at least as early as the 1970s, that the Third World never really existed, in the sense that the conception attempts to pose as a homogeneous unit an essentially diverse set of nations, failing to grasp and even negating the significant social, economic, and cultural differences between Paraguay and Pakistan, Morocco and Mozambique. Recognizing this real multiplicity, however, should not blind us to the fact that, from the point of view of capital in its march of global conquest, such a unitary and homogenizing conception did have a certain validity. For example,

Rosa Luxemburg clearly takes the standpoint of capital when she divides the world into the capitalist domain and the noncapitalist environment. The various zones of that environment are undoubtedly radically different from one another, but from the standpoint of capital it is all the outside: potential terrain for its expanded accumulation and its future conquest. During the cold war, when the regions of the Second World were effectively closed, Third World meant to the dominant capitalist nations the remaining open space, the terrain of possibility. The diverse cultural, social, and economic forms could all potentially be subsumed formally under the dynamic of capitalist production and the capitalist markets. From the standpoint of this potential subsumption, despite the real and substantial differences among nations, the Third World was really one.

It is similarly logical when Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein, and others differentiate within the capitalist domain among central, peripheral, and semi-peripheral countries.<sup>11</sup> Center, periphery, and semi-periphery are distinguished by different social, political, and bureaucratic forms, different productive processes, and different forms of accumulation. (The more recent conceptual division between North and South is not significantly different in this regard.) Like the First-Second-Third World conception, the division of the capitalist sphere into center, periphery, and semi-periphery homogenizes and eclipses real differences among nations and cultures, but does so in the interest of highlighting a tendential unity of political, social, and economic forms that emerge in the long imperialist processes of formal subsumption. In other words, Third World, South, and periphery all homogenize real differences to highlight the unifying processes of capitalist development, but also and more important, they name *the potential unity of an international opposition, the potential confluence of anticapitalist countries and forces.*

The geographical divisions among nation-states or even between central and peripheral, northern and southern clusters of nation-states are no longer sufficient to grasp the global divisions and distribution of production, accumulation, and social forms.

Through the decentralization of production and the consolidation of the world market, the international divisions and flows of labor and capital have fractured and multiplied so that it is no longer possible to demarcate large geographical zones as center and periphery, North and South. In geographical regions such as the Southern Cone of Latin America or Southeast Asia, all levels of production can exist simultaneously and side by side, from the highest levels of technology, productivity and accumulation to the lowest, with a complex social mechanism maintaining their differentiation and interaction. In the metropolises, too, labor spans the continuum from the heights to the depths of capitalist production: the sweatshops of New York and Paris can rival those of Hong Kong and Manila. If the First World and the Third World, center and periphery, North and South were ever really separated along national lines, today they clearly infuse one another, distributing inequalities and barriers along multiple and fractured lines. This is not to say that the United States and Brazil, Britain and India are now identical territories in terms of capitalist production and circulation, but rather that between them are no differences of nature, only differences of degree. The various nations and regions contain different proportions of what was thought of as First World and Third, center and periphery, North and South. The geography of uneven development and the lines of division and hierarchy will no longer be found along stable national or international boundaries, but in fluid infra- and supranational borders.

Some may protest, with a certain justification, that the dominant voices of the global order are proclaiming the nation-state dead just when "the nation" has emerged as a revolutionary weapon for the subordinated, for the wretched of the earth. After the victory of national liberation struggles and after the emergence of potentially destabilizing international alliances, which matured for decades after the Bandung Conference, what better way to undermine the power of Third World nationalism and internationalism than to deprive it of its central and guiding support, the nation-state! In other words, according to this view, which provides at least one plausible narrative

for this complex history, the nation-state, which had been the guarantor of international order and the keystone to imperialist conquest and sovereignty, became through the rise and organization of anti-imperialist forces the element that most endangered the international order. Thus imperialism in retreat was forced to abandon and destroy the prize of its own armory before the weapon could be wielded against it.

We believe, however, that it is a grave mistake to harbor any nostalgia for the powers of the nation-state or to resurrect any politics that celebrates the nation. First of all, these efforts are in vain because the decline of the nation-state is not simply the result of an ideological position that might be reversed by an act of political will: it is a structural and irreversible process. The nation was not only a cultural formulation, a feeling of belonging, and a shared heritage, but also and perhaps primarily a juridico-economic structure. The declining effectiveness of this structure can be traced clearly through the evolution of a whole series of global juridico-economic bodies, such as GATT, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the IMF. The globalization of production and circulation, supported by this supranational juridical scaffolding, supersedes the effectiveness of national juridical structures. Second, and more important, even if the nation were still to be an effective weapon, the nation carries with it a whole series of repressive structures and ideologies (as we argued in Section 2.2), and any strategy that relies on it should be rejected on that basis.

### The New Segmentations

The general equalization or smoothing of social space, however, in both the withering of civil society and the decline of national boundaries, does not indicate that social inequalities and segmentations have disappeared. On the contrary, they have in many respects become more severe, but under a different form. It might be more accurate to say that center and periphery, North and South no longer define an international order but rather have moved closer to one another. Empire is characterized by the close proximity of

extremely unequal populations, which creates a situation of permanent social danger and requires the powerful apparatuses of the society of control to ensure separation and guarantee the new management of social space.

Trends in urban architecture in the world's megalopolises demonstrate one aspect of these new segmentations. Where the extremes of wealth and poverty have increased and the physical distance between rich and poor has decreased in global cities such as Los Angeles, São Paulo, and Singapore, elaborate measures have to be taken to maintain their separation. Los Angeles is perhaps the leader in the trend toward what Mike Davis calls "fortress architecture," in which not only private homes but also commercial centers and government buildings create open and free environments internally by creating a closed and impenetrable exterior.<sup>12</sup> This tendency in urban planning and architecture has established in concrete, physical terms what we called earlier the end of the outside, or rather the decline of public space that had allowed for open and unprogrammed social interaction.

Architectural analysis, however, can give only a first introduction to the problematic of the new separations and segmentations. The new lines of division are more clearly defined by the politics of labor. The computer and informational revolution that has made it possible to link together different groups of labor power in real time across the world has led to furious and unrestrained competition among workers. Information technologies have been used to weaken the structural resistances of labor power, in terms of both the rigidity of wage structures and cultural and geographical differences. Capital has thus been able to impose both temporal flexibility and spatial mobility. It should be clear that this process of weakening the resistances and rigidities of labor power has become a completely political process oriented toward a form of management that maximizes economic profit. This is where the theory of imperial administrative action becomes central.

The imperial politics of labor is designed primarily to lower the price of labor. This is, in effect, something like a process of



primitive accumulation, a process of reproletarianization. The regulation of the working day, which was the real keystone to socialist politics throughout the past two centuries, has been completely overturned. Working days are often twelve, fourteen, sixteen hours long without weekends or vacations; there is work for men, women, and children alike, and for the old and the handicapped. Empire has work for everyone! The more unregulated the regime of exploitation, the more work there is. This is the basis on which the new segmentations of work are created. They are determined (in the language of the economists) by the different levels of productivity, but we could summarize the change simply by saying that there is more work and lower wages. Like God's broom sweeping across society (this is how Hegel described the imposition of barbarian law, principally at the hands of Attila the Hun), the new norms of productivity differentiate and segment the workers. There are still places in the world where poverty allows for the reproduction of labor power at a lower cost, and there are still places in the metropolises where differences of consumption force a lower class to sell itself for less, or really to submit itself to a more brutal regime of capitalist exploitation.

Financial and monetary flows follow more or less the same global patterns as the flexible organization of labor power. On the one hand, speculative and finance capital goes where the price of labor power is lowest and where the administrative force to guarantee exploitation is highest. On the other hand, the countries that still maintain the rigidities of labor and oppose its full flexibility and mobility are punished, tormented, and finally destroyed by global monetary mechanisms. The stock market drops when the unemployment rate goes down, or really when the percentage of workers who are not immediately flexible and mobile rises. The same happens when the social policies in a country do not completely accommodate the imperial mandate of flexibility and mobility—or better, when some elements of the welfare state are preserved as a sign of the persistence of the nation-state. Monetary policies enforce the segmentations dictated by labor policies.

Fear of violence, poverty, and unemployment is in the end the primary and immediate force that creates and maintains these new segmentations. What stands behind the various politics of the new segmentations is a politics of communication. As we argued earlier, the fundamental content of the information that the enormous communication corporations present is fear. The constant fear of poverty and anxiety over the future are the keys to creating a struggle among the poor for work and maintaining conflict among the imperial proletariat. Fear is the ultimate guarantee of the new segmentations.

### Imperial Administration

After we have seen how traditional social barriers are lowered in the formation of Empire and how at the same time new segmentations are created, we must also investigate the administrative modalities through which these various developments unfold. It is easy to see that these processes are full of contradictions. When power is made immanent and sovereignty transforms into governmentality, the functions of rule and regimes of control have to develop on a continuum that flattens differences to a common plane. We have seen, however, that differences are, on the contrary, accentuated in this process, in such a way that imperial integration determines new mechanisms of the separation and segmentation of different strata of the population. The problem of imperial administration is thus to manage this process of integration and therefore to pacify, mobilize, and control the separated and segmented social forces.

In these terms, however, the problem is still not clearly posed. The segmentation of the multitude has in fact been the condition of political administration throughout history. The difference today lies in the fact that, whereas in modern regimes of national sovereignty, administration worked toward a *linear* integration of conflicts and toward a coherent apparatus that could repress them, that is, toward the rational normalization of social life with respect to both the administrative goal of equilibrium and the development of administrative reforms, in the imperial framework administration

becomes *fractal* and aims to integrate conflicts not by imposing a coherent social apparatus but by controlling differences. It is no longer possible to understand imperial administration in the terms of a Hegelian definition of administration, which is grounded on the mediations of bourgeois society that constitute the spatial center of social life; but it is equally impossible to understand it according to a Weberian definition, that is, a rational definition that is based on continuous temporal mediation and an emerging principle of legitimacy.

A first principle that defines imperial administration is that in it *the management of political ends tends to be separate from the management of bureaucratic means*. The new paradigm is thus not only different from but opposed to the old public administration model of the modern state, which continually strove to coordinate its system of bureaucratic means with its political ends. In the imperial regime, bureaucracies (and administrative means in general) are considered not according to the linear logics of their functionality to goals, but according to differential and multiple instrumental logics. The problem of administration is not a problem of unity but one of instrumental multifunctionality. Whereas for the legitimation and administration of the modern state the universality and equality of administrative actions were paramount, in the imperial regime what is fundamental is the singularity and adequacy of the actions to specific ends.

From this first principle, however, there arises what seems to be a paradox. Precisely to the extent that administration is singularized and no longer functions simply as the actor for centralized political and deliberative organs, it becomes increasingly autonomous and engages more closely with various social groups: business and labor groups, ethnic and religious groups, legal and criminal groups, and so forth. Instead of contributing to social integration, *imperial administration acts rather as a disseminating and differentiating mechanism*. This is the second principle of imperial administration. Administration will thus tend to present specific procedures that allow the regime to engage directly with the various social singu-

ties, and the administration will be more effective the more direct its contact with the different elements of social reality. Hence administrative action becomes increasingly autocentric and thus functional only to the specific problems that it has to resolve. It becomes more and more difficult to recognize a continuous line of administrative action across the set of relays and networks of the imperial regime. In short, the old administrative principle of universality, treating all equally, is replaced by the differentiation and singularization of procedures, treating each differently.

Even though it is difficult now to trace a coherent and universal line of procedure, such as the one that characterized modern sovereign systems, this does not mean that the imperial apparatus is not unified. The autonomy and unity of administrative action is constructed in other ways, by means neither of the normative deduction of continental European juridical systems nor of the procedural formalism of Anglo-Saxon systems. Rather, it is created by conforming to the structural logics that are active in the construction of Empire, such as the police and military logics (or really the repression of potential subversive forces in the context of imperial peace), the economic logics (the imposition of the market, which in turn is ruled by the monetary regime), and the ideological and communicative logics. The only way that administrative action gains its autonomy and legitimate authority in the imperial regime is by following along the differentiating lines of these logics. This authorization, however, is not direct. Administration is not strategically oriented toward the realization of the imperial logics. It submits to them, insofar as they animate the great military, monetary, and communicative means that authorize administration itself. *Administrative action has become fundamentally non-strategic, and thus it is legitimated through heterogeneous and indirect means*. This is the third principle of administrative action in the imperial regime.

Once we have recognized these three "negative" principles of imperial administrative action—its instrumental character, its procedural autonomy, and its heterogeneity—we have to ask what allows it to function without continually opening violent social

antagonisms. What virtue affords this disarticulated system of control, inequality, and segmentation a sufficient measure of consent and legitimation? This leads to the fourth principle, the "positive" characteristic of imperial administration. The unifying matrix and the most dominant value of imperial administration lie in its *local effectiveness*.

To understand how this fourth principle can support the administrative system as a whole, consider the kind of administrative relationships that were formed between the feudal territorial organizations and the monarchic power structures in Europe in the Middle Ages, or between mafia organizations and state structures in the modern period. In both cases the procedural autonomy, differential application, and territorialized links to various segments of the population, together with the specific and limited exercise of legitimate violence, were not generally in contradiction with the principle of a coherent and unified ordering. These systems of the distribution of administrative power were held together by the local effectiveness of a series of specific deployments of military, financial, and ideological powers. In the European medieval system, the vassal was required to contribute armed men and money when the monarch needed them (whereas ideology and communication were controlled in large part by the church). In the mafia system, the administrative autonomy of the extended family and the deployment of police-like violence throughout the social territory guaranteed the adherence to the primary principles of the capitalist system and supported the ruling political class. As in these medieval and mafia examples, the autonomy of localized administrative bodies does not contradict imperial administration—on the contrary, it aids and expands its global effectiveness.

Local autonomy is a fundamental condition, the *sine qua non* of the development of the imperial regime. In fact, given the mobility of populations in Empire, it would not be possible to claim a principle of legitimate administration if its autonomy did not also march a nomad path with the populations. It would likewise be impossible to order the segments of the multitude through processes

that force it to be more mobile and flexible in hybrid cultural forms and in multicolored ghettos if this administration were not equally flexible and capable of specific and continuous procedural revisions and differentiations. Consent to the imperial regime is not something that descends from the transcendentals of good administration, which were defined in the modern rights states. Consent, rather, is formed through the local effectiveness of the regime.

We have sketched here only the most general outlines of imperial administration. A definition of imperial administration that focuses only on the autonomous local effectiveness of administrative action cannot in itself guarantee the system against eventual threats, riots, subversions, and insurrections, or even against the normal conflicts among local segments of the administration. This argument, however, does manage to transform the discussion into one about the "royal prerogatives" of imperial government—once we have established the principle that the regulation of conflict and the recourse to the exercise of legitimate violence must be resolved in terms of self-regulation (of production, money, and communication) and by the internal police forces of Empire. This is where the question of administration is transformed into a question of command.

### Imperial Command

Whereas modern regimes tended to bring administration increasingly in line with command to the point of making the two indistinguishable, imperial command remains separate from administration. In both the modern and the imperial regimes, the internal contradictions along with the risks and possible deviations of a non-centralized administration demand the guarantee of a supreme command. The early theorists of the juridical foundations of the modern state conceive of this as an originary appeal to a supreme power, but the theory of imperial command has no need for such fables about its genealogy. It is not the appeals of a multitude perpetually at war that demand a pacifying supreme power (as in Hobbes), nor the appeals of a commercial class that demand the security of contracts

(as in Locke and Hume). Imperial command is rather the result of a social eruption that has overturned all the old relationships that constituted sovereignty.

Imperial command is exercised no longer through the disciplinary modalities of the modern state but rather through the modalities of biopolitical control. These modalities have as their basis and their object a productive multitude that cannot be regimented and normalized, but must nonetheless be governed, even in its autonomy. The concept of the People no longer functions as the organized subject of the system of command, and consequently the identity of the People is replaced by the mobility, flexibility, and perpetual differentiation of the multitude. This shift demystifies and destroys the circular modern idea of the legitimacy of power by which power constructs from the multitude a single subject that could then in turn legitimate that same power. That sophistic tautology no longer works.

The multitude is governed with the instruments of the post-modern capitalist system and within the social relations of the real subsumption. The multitude can only be ruled along internal lines, in production, in exchanges, in culture—in other words, in the biopolitical context of its existence. In its deterritorialized autonomy, however, this biopolitical existence of the multitude has the potential to be transformed into an autonomous mass of intelligent productivity, into an absolute democratic power, as Spinoza would say. If that were to happen, capitalist domination of production, exchange, and communication would be overthrown. Preventing this is the first and primary task of imperial government. We should keep in mind, however, that the constitution of Empire depends for its own existence on the forces that pose this threat, the autonomous forces of productive cooperation. Their powers must be controlled but not destroyed.

The guarantee that Empire offers to globalized capital does not involve a micropolitical and/or microadministrative management of populations. The apparatus of command has no access to the local spaces and the determinate temporal sequences of life where the

administration functions; it does not manage to put its hands on the singularities and their activity. What imperial command seeks substantially to invest and protect, and what it guarantees for capitalist development, are rather the general equilibria of the global system.

Imperial control operates through three global and absolute means: the bomb, money, and ether. The panoply of thermonuclear weapons, effectively gathered at the pinnacle of Empire, represents the continuous possibility of the destruction of life itself. This is an operation of absolute violence, a new metaphysical horizon, which completely changes the conception whereby the sovereign state had a monopoly of legitimate physical force. At one time, in modernity, this monopoly was legitimated either as the expropriation of weapons from the violent and anarchic mob, the disordered mass of individuals who tend to slaughter one another, or as the instrument of defense against the enemy, that is, against other peoples organized in states. Both these means of legitimation were oriented finally toward the survival of the population. Today they are no longer effective. The expropriation of the means of violence from a supposedly self-destructive population tends to become merely administrative and police operations aimed at maintaining the segmentations of productive territories. The second justification becomes less effective too as nuclear war between state powers becomes increasingly unthinkable. The development of nuclear technologies and their imperial concentration have limited the sovereignty of most of the countries of the world insofar as it has taken away from them the power to make decisions over war and peace, which is a primary element of the traditional definition of sovereignty. Furthermore, the ultimate threat of the imperial bomb has reduced every war to a limited conflict, a civil war, a dirty war, and so forth. It has made every war the exclusive domain of administrative and police power. From no other standpoint is the passage from modernity to postmodernity and from modern sovereignty to Empire more evident than it is from the standpoint of the bomb. Empire is defined here in the final instance as the "non-place" of

life, or, in other words, as the absolute capacity for destruction. Empire is the ultimate form of biopower insofar as it is the absolute inversion of the power of life.

Money is the second global means of absolute control. The construction of the world market has consisted first of all in the monetary deconstruction of national markets, the dissolution of national and/or regional regimes of monetary regulation, and the subordination of those markets to the needs of financial powers. As national monetary structures tend to lose any characteristics of sovereignty, we can see emerging through them the shadows of a new unilateral monetary reterritorialization that is concentrated at the political and financial centers of Empire, the global cities. This is not the construction of a universal monetary regime on the basis of new productive localities, new local circuits of circulation, and thus new values; instead, it is a monetary construction based purely on the political necessities of Empire. Money is the imperial arbiter, but just as in the case of the imperial nuclear threat, this arbiter has neither a determinate location nor a transcendent status. Just as the nuclear threat authorizes the generalized power of the police, so too the monetary arbiter is continually articulated in relation to the productive functions, measures of value, and allocations of wealth that constitute the world market. Monetary mechanisms are the primary means to control the market.<sup>13</sup>

Ether is the third and final fundamental medium of imperial control. The management of communication, the structuring of the education system, and the regulation of culture appear today more than ever as sovereign prerogatives. All of this, however, dissolves in the ether. The contemporary systems of communication are not subordinated to sovereignty; on the contrary, sovereignty seems to be subordinated to communication—or actually, sovereignty is articulated through communications systems. In the field of communication, the paradoxes that bring about the dissolution of territorial and/or national sovereignty are more clear than ever. The deterritorializing capacities of communication are unique: communication is not satisfied by limiting or weakening modern

territorial sovereignty; rather it attacks the very possibility of linking an order to a space. It imposes a continuous and complete circulation of signs. Deterritorialization is the primary force and circulation the form through which social communication manifests itself. In this way and in this ether, languages become functional to circulation and dissolve every sovereign relationship. Education and culture too cannot help submitting to the circulating society of the spectacle. Here we reach an extreme limit of the process of the dissolution of the relationship between order and space. At this point we cannot conceive this relationship except in *another space*, an elsewhere that cannot in principle be contained in the articulation of sovereign acts.

The space of communication is completely deterritorialized. It is absolutely other with respect to the residual spaces that we have been analyzing in terms of the monopoly of physical force and the definition of monetary measure. Here it is a question not of residue but of *metamorphosis*: a metamorphosis of all the elements of political economy and state theory. Communication is the form of capitalist production in which capital has succeeded in submitting society entirely and globally to its regime, suppressing all alternative paths. If ever an alternative is to be proposed, it will have to arise from within the society of the real subsumption and demonstrate all the contradictions at the heart of it.

These three means of control refer us again to the three tiers of the imperial pyramid of power. The bomb is a monarchic power, money aristocratic, and ether democratic. It might appear in each of these cases as though the reins of these mechanisms were held by the United States. It might appear as if the United States were the new Rome, or a cluster of new Romes: Washington (the bomb), New York (money), and Los Angeles (ether). Any such territorial conception of imperial space, however, is continually destabilized by the fundamental flexibility, mobility, and deterritorialization at the core of the imperial apparatus. Perhaps the monopoly of force and the regulation of money can be given partial territorial determinations, but communication cannot. Communication has become the central element that establishes the relations of produc-

tion, guiding capitalist development and also transforming productive forces. This dynamic produces an extremely open situation: here the centralized locus of power has to confront the power of productive subjectivities, the power of all those who contribute to the interactive production of communication. Here in this circulating domain of imperial domination over the new forms of production, communication is most widely disseminated in capillary forms.

### BIG GOVERNMENT IS OVER!

"Big government is over" is the battle cry of conservatives and neoliberals throughout Empire. The Republican Congress of the United States, led by Newt Gingrich, fought to demystify the fetish of big government by calling it "totalitarian" and "fascist" (in a session of Congress that wanted to be imperial but ended up being carnivalesque). It appeared as though we had returned to the times of the great diatribes of Henry Ford against Franklin D. Roosevelt! Or rather to the much less grand times of Margaret Thatcher's first administration, when she frenetically, and with a sense of humor that only the British can muster, sought to sell off the public goods of the nation, from communications systems to the water supply, from the rail system and oil to the universities and hospitals. In the United States, however, the representatives of the most avid conservative wing finally went too far, and in the end everyone recognized it. The bottom line and brutal irony was that they sounded the attack on big government just when the development of the postmodern informational revolution most needed big government to support its efforts—for the construction of information highways, the control of the equilibria of the stock exchanges despite the wild fluctuations of speculation, the firm maintenance of monetary values, public investment in the military-industrial system to help transform the mode of production, the reform of the educational system to adapt to these new productive networks, and so forth. Precisely at this time, after the Soviet Union had collapsed, the imperial tasks facing the U.S. government were most urgent and big government was most needed.

When the proponents of the globalization of capital cry out against big government, they are being not only hypocritical but also ungrateful. Where would capital be if it had not put its hands on big government and

made it work for centuries in its exclusive interest? And today where would imperial capital be if big government were not big enough to wield the power of life and death over the entire global multitude? Where would capital be without a big government capable of printing money to produce and reproduce a global order that guarantees capitalist power and wealth? Or without the communications networks that expropriate the cooperation of the productive multitude? Every morning when they wake up, capitalists and their representatives across the world, instead of reading the curses against big government in the Wall Street Journal, ought to get down on their knees and praise it!

Now that the most radical conservative opponents of big government have collapsed under the weight of the paradox of their position, we want to pick up their banners where they left them in the mud. It is our turn now to cry "Big government is over!" Why should that slogan be the exclusive property of the conservatives? Certainly, having been educated in class struggle, we know well that big government has also been an instrument for the redistribution of social wealth and that, under the pressure of working-class struggle, it has served in the fight for equality and democracy. Today, however, those times are over. In imperial postmodernity big government has become merely the despotic means of domination and the totalitarian production of subjectivity. Big government conducts the great orchestra of subjectivities reduced to commodities. And it is consequently the determination of the limits of desire: these are in fact the lines that, in the biopolitical Empire, establish the new division of labor across the global horizon, in the interest of reproducing the power to exploit and subjugate. We, on the contrary, struggle because desire has no limit and (since the desire to exist and the desire to produce are one and the same thing) because life can be continuously, freely, and equally enjoyed and reproduced.

Some might object that the productive biopolitical universe still requires some form of command over it, and that realistically we should aim not at destroying big government but at putting our hands on its controls. We have to put an end to such illusions that have plagued the socialist and communist traditions for so long! On the contrary, from the standpoint of the multitude and its quest for autonomous self-government, we have to put an end to the continuous repetition of the same that Marx lamented 150 years ago when he said that all revolutions have only perfected the

state instead of destroying it. That repetition has only become clearer in our century, when the great compromise (in its liberal, socialist, and fascist forms) among big government, big business, and big labor has forced the state to produce horrible new fruits: concentration camps, gulags, ghettos, and the like.

You are just a bunch of anarchists, the new Plato on the block will finally yell at us. That is not true. We would be anarchists if we were not to speak (as did Thrasymachus and Callicles, Plato's immortal interlocutors) from the standpoint of a materiality constituted in the networks of productive cooperation, in other words, from the perspective of a humanity that is constructed productively, that is constituted through the "common name" of freedom. No, we are not anarchists but communists who have seen how much repression and destruction of humanity have been wrought by liberal and socialist big governments. We have seen how all this is being re-created in imperial government, just when the circuits of productive cooperation have made labor power as a whole capable of constituting itself in government.

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## PART 4

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# THE DECLINE AND FALL OF EMPIRE