

Nomad Aesthetics and the Global Knowledge Economy

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ABSTRACT

Digital technology and software networks enable large numbers of knowledge workers to incorporate themselves wherever and whenever they wish and to choose between a sedentary or nomadic lifestyle. One way of configuring these new circumstances is as the *extensive* power of people, products and markets to speedily overcome obstacles and span distances. However, we increasingly see non-representative corporations accelerating human pace and swallowing open spaces within the rational administrative control of a new supranational "Empire". *Intensive* movement, on the other hand, reconfigures the human condition in ways that politically and ethically engage with universalizing global processes. Like the traditional nomads of the steppe or the desert, for example, the movement in question is a complex, dynamic relation characterized by its immediacy and continuous variation of alliance and resistance, that remains difficult to locate, difficult to control, and even more difficult to defeat. The paper argues that nomadism can be a starting point for an opposing strategy to the global knowledge economy.

*Some mother in Jakarta lays down her
weary head
In some free trade zone compound
where they work you 'till your dead*

*Hunger stalks the corridor famine and
disease*

*I seen the multinationals walking hand in
hand
with globalising marketeers.*

Woody Guthrie, *Alabama* 3

INTRODUCTION

The speed, simultaneity and interconnectivity of modern electronic networks are now bringing all social, economic and political functions together in ways that promise total connectivity in a sort of "global cerebralisation" (Ansell Pearson, 1997). New digital technologies like mobile phones, Internet software design and electronic positioning devices, enable large numbers of people to be geographically independent of homes and offices; to work wherever and whenever they wish and to choose between a sedentary or *nomadic* lifestyle. This is noteworthy because organizations are usually identified as discrete entities, a community-of-place. That this view is becoming increasingly obsolete, with the rapid development of computer networks, is not new (see, for example, Tsoukas, 1992). What is interesting, is although so-called "network" representations are closer to the actual transformations of modern organizations, this view too has its limits. Computer networks "transform

organizations from gatherings of people under the same roof to networks of electronically connected individuals, as well as inter-organizational alliances" (Tsoukas, 1992, p. 443). They do so, however, only within the established structures and systems of a worldwide knowledge economy. This demands the regularization of patterns and routines, the circumscription of possible movement, and the construction of constant relations of power, that can productively capture and codify socio-economic activity.

According to Hardt and Negri (2000) the global knowledge economy constantly deploys itself in every direction to constitute and appropriate world markets and new territories. It appears worldwide organizations, no less than nomadic bands or packs, are able to deconstruct the boundaries of nation states and employment forms. They increasingly operate through irreducible and immeasurable forms of production that challenge traditional bases of power. How then can true nomadic movement be differentiated from the global processes of capital? An important difference to consider is between the *intensive* movement of actual nomadic relations and the *extensive* accumulation and commodification of the global knowledge economy.

The point of this paper is first of all to explore these two different modes of organizing. Second, extending from Hardt and Negri's (2001) understanding of *Empire*, it argues that the global knowledge economy lies *increasingly* within the rational administrative control of a new kind of boundary-less organization "sans frontiers". The freedom to circulate, to demonstrate, or to resist and revolt in this "open" organization continue to be checked by a networked "biopower" (Foucault, 1980), that regulates social life from its interior; a decentralized authority that

achieves an effective control over the population by becoming an essential part of social life, produced and reproduced by all of society's members. The paper concludes that true nomadism reconstitutes the "freedom of distance" and serves as a useful counter-point to the "death of distance" imposed by the global knowledge economy.

THE AGE OF CORPORATE NOMADISM?

Makimoto and Manners (1997, p. 5) note how, in the new millennium, digital technology will deliver "increasingly inexpensive and efficient means of communicating with family and friends, offices and customers, libraries and information sources of every kind." Their *Digital Nomad* explores the new potential for global mobility and cites some examples of current corporate nomads, such as the president of a major European technology company, who does not have the traditional president's office. Instead, he spends his working week travelling around Europe from one company site to the next. Identifying recent corporate trends in downsizing, mergers, de-mergers, and acquisitions, Makimoto and Manners (1997) argue that these dislocations of working life are merely precursors to the accelerating pace (and shrinking space) of social, technological and communicational changes that will transform organizations from "fixed entities" to "wandering tribes" in the 21st century. For them, these changes reflect the emergence of business nomads who, like the pastoral nomads of ancient times, look for pasture, settle and then move on. As they point out:

Not only would a nomadic company be free to scout around for the best deals by which to rent computer

space for the corporate database, it could also seek out the most favorable regulatory regime the lowest tax rates, the most obliging financiers, the most willing workforces. (Makimoto & Manners, 1997, p. 59)

Now, it is probably true that for cosmopolitan global business executives the nomadic life in “planetary time” is an attractive and fashionable alternative to the “localizing”, space-fixing experience of the majority. “Interim Executives,” for example, enjoy boundary-less careers. They are “crisis managers”, with the skills to step into the breach and handle one-off events such plant moves or closures, departures of key executives, or ventures and acquisitions (Waller, 1998). These “corporate gypsies” (Waller, 1998) move from one job to another, often acting as hands on managers, in response to a particular problem.

Whatever the economic benefits for companies and individuals to work in this way, however, there is more to nomadism than the technical ability to live and work on the go.

The fashionable term “nomads”, applied indiscriminately to all contemporaries of the postmodern era, is grossly misleading, as it glosses over the profound differences which separate the two types of experience and render all similarity between them formal and superficial. (Bauman, 1998, p. 87).

For Bauman (1998), the freedom to move is certainly uppermost amongst the rank of coveted values. He shows, however, that the new speed of mobility enjoyed by global finance, trade and information industries polarizes rather than homogenizes the human condition. Nowadays, Bauman argues, we are all on the move, whether in

fact or desire, but the gap between likely experiences and fantasy (between the top and bottom of the mobility hierarchy) is becoming an abyss. Some, he continues, enjoy unprecedented freedom (from obstacles, distances). For others, it means the locality, which they have no choice but to inhabit, is moved from under their feet. Consequently, the present day combination of consumerism and hierarchy of mobility lays bare the fact that it is not global mobility per se that is uppermost amongst the rank of coveted values, but *access* to global mobility: in other words, *freedom of choice*.

Being a “citizen of the world”, therefore, may be attractive at first, but can also be an evasive tactic. As Hardt and Negri (2001) point out, circulation, mobility and flexibility are not, in themselves, “liberatory”. How will world governments react, for example, to those who opt for a high-tech nomadic life? What are the penalties associated with having to live with only what you can carry? How many people really want a life with no physical roots? And anyway, is the viability of nomadism a dubious claim in an age when individuals are enduring the hardships of cultural Diaspora and inner city homelessness? For many workers the last quarter of the twentieth century were decades of increasing uncertainty. Rising costs and shifting patterns of production resulted in huge economic and social dislocations involving the displacement of workers in both rich and poor countries (*The Economist*, 2001a). Managers have had to face up to the prospect of an endlessly changing pattern of employment and the end of a job for life (Waller, 1998). Here, Makimoto and Manners’ (1997) ubiquitous digitization could spell even more powerful pressures.

One concern is the increased control over workers that digital communications technologies provide. The promised

revolution and liberation of “real-time” audio and video on the Internet, for example, could be interpreted as the impersonal constraint of a legitimate public time on increasingly illegitimate “private times” (Nowotny, 1994). What about the wife of the nomadic company president who hardly sees her husband? Clearly it would be an advantage for corporations to have enhanced access to their employees’ time. Corporations see no reason why their staff should not always be contactable, why they should not work during those hours spent on planes or trains, waiting in airports and stations, or hidden in distant hotels. As Nowotny (1994) argues, being exposed to the pressure of instantaneity could mean forfeiting the right to one’s own time and could turn into real nightmares of the vulnerability of the private sphere, which has to take refuge from the excess of what is technologically possible in new basic rights and other protective legislation.

Baudrillard (1993, p. 63) is similarly critical of what he calls the ever-increasing transparency or “normative socialization” and “universal conditioning” of the State. He sees the very transparency of an open society as a threat. The increasing reliance on electronic connectivity, he argues, must logically occasion a “technological purification” of life, which becomes an open book to all those who have the desire and capability to monitor. The “Mondex” electronic credit card system, itemized telephone billing, ATM cash withdrawals, fingerprint ID checking systems, voice recognition systems and, perhaps most accurately, retina or iris scanning are all existing or near future examples of the *increasing* potential for governments and businesses to exert enormous control over the information and communication on and between people in Makimoto and Manners’ (1997) digitized without-walls-world. Ironically it is this vulnerability of

transparency that is driving current, corporate Internet software design towards fire-walled intranets and fire-walled tunnels for firm-to-firm transactions (Sassen, 2000), as well as other excluding private spaces – gated communities, shopping malls and arcades, commercial complexes and recreational facilities – all aimed at keeping their legitimate users safe and the illegitimate “other” firmly outside (Bauman, 1998; Franzén, 2001).

A second concern with the corporate nomad metaphor is that the image of the global executive represents a blatant retreat to the heroic image of transformational, charismatic and visionary individuals in normative conceptions of management and leadership, critically reviewed by Gronn (2002) and others (see, for example, Barker, 2001; Wood, 2005). Executives are required to exercise discretion, take initiatives and assume responsibility. Typically they are seen as “tough,” “inspirational creators,” “clear sighted,” someone “who to has tremendous inter-personal skills and who can go into quite different cultures and very rapidly make an impact” (Waller, 1998, p. 31). Whilst research grounded in the study of successful leaders is informative, it is not definitive. Such descriptions simplify and may prove to be of limited, practical applicability within the climate of complexity, interdependence, and fragmentation that characterizes 21st Century organizations.

A third point is that the corporate nomad may not be truly nomadic at all. Although peoples and cultures that are literally nomadic inspire the nomadic image, it does not stand for homelessness, or compulsive displacement. Instead, the nomad is “a figuration or the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity.” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 22). The traditional nomads of the steppe or the

desert, for example, do not voluntarily move from one place to another, but distribute themselves more or less in the same, open space. For Braidotti (1994, p. 16) "nomadism consists not so much in being homeless, as in being capable of creating your home everywhere." The nomadism in question, therefore, is about disengagement, destabilization, and deconstruction. It refers to the kind of "critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 5). It is definitely *not* about extraterritorial elites who travel as tourists, "sensation gatherers ... going through a succession of episodes hygienically insulated from ... the localized rest, the vagabonds" (Bauman, 1998, p. 88).

FROM GLOBAL METROPOLIS TO TERRA INCOGNITA

The argument being put forward here is that nomads do not perpetually move from one company to another, or from one market to another, spanning distances instantaneously. Instead, "what is nomadic about them is their refusal to settle within established codes and conventions ... the necessity to run free of established structures and systems of organization and territories" (Plant 1993, p. 92). In this case, the new breed of nomad executive is more like a global tourist, wandering at ease, whereas the nomad travels surreptitiously, if at all. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 381) point out:

... the nomad is one who does not depart, does not want to depart, who clings to the smooth space left by the receding forest, where the steppe or the desert advances, and who invents nomadism as a response to this challenge.

The nomad and the global tourist are two aspects of the same process; their relationship to the world is primarily aesthetic. The nomad aesthetic experiences space as smooth, unlimited, undivided, and marked only by trails or traditional routes. Like the network of waddies on the Arabian Peninsula, which determine the routes for the caravans and holy pilgrimages, nomad space works with the topology of the land. It goes in all directions, any point connecting with any other. It is an immediate, corporeal space, irreducible to Euclidean geometrism, and can be explored only by moving through it. Conversely, the global knowledge economy aesthetic of space is criss-crossed with vertical and horizontal grid squares. It is a striated space with deep pillars and parallel lines; a metropolitan, ordered space, one that delimits a territory, defining it for a specific activity, and, secondly, establishing different degrees of access to people, things and relations. It is concerned with the "capture of flows of all kinds, populations, commodities or commerce, money or capital" along "fixed paths, in well-defined directions, which restrict speed, regulate circulation, relativize movement, and measure in detail the relative movements of subjects and objects" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 386). This difference between open and striated space is superbly illustrated in Calvino's (1997) *Invisible Cities*. Calvino's hero, Marco Polo, recounts the imperceptible cities he has visited during his travels on behalf of Kublai Khan: thin cities, trading cities, continuous cities, hidden cities, etc. Although Polo's accounts summon up many cities and countries to fuel the Khan's pride in the provincial territories conquered and the *extensiveness* of the latter's empire, he is really talking about only one city, Venice, as if he had never really moved. Displaying a definite nomadic

consciousness, Polo is able to create a whole genealogy from a square on a chessboard. The quantity of knowledge that could be read in a little square of planed wood overwhelms Kublai Khan, who realizes that the definitive conquest of the empire lies hidden in the *intensive* experience of the, hitherto, “smooth and empty” squares on the chessboard. He no longer has to send Marco Polo on distant expeditions and conquests. Instead, he need only keep him playing chess to finally “experience” his empire. Just as the nomad is one who does not depart from the smooth space, Calvino illustrates the kind of critical consciousness needed to live there. The smooth space only appears empty, but is in fact teeming with life – if you know how to look for it.

NOMADISM AND THE GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

The nomad is a cartographer, able to read invisible maps. A problem occurs, however, when the global knowledge economy, through increasingly unaccountable supranational corporations or State bureaucracies, wants to “territorialize” or bound these invisible lines. Specifically, the problem is where to draw the boundaries. How to delimit the territory and create a differentiated space, for example, without interfering with the ancient mosaic of Aboriginal songlines or any of their “sacred sites” (Chatwin, 1998). As far as the recent history of Australia is concerned, Caucasian settlers and capitalists have largely ignored ancient knowledge, beliefs and practices. According to Muecke (1984, p. 25): “The smooth space of these invisible and secret tracks has been violently assaulted by the public checker-board grid of the states.” He continues, “the interrogation of black man by white man in Australia has always been, and continues

to be, and (sic) interrogation about quantities: “How far? How many? How long?” (Muecke, 1984, p. 35). The British Army posting “Keep Out” signs, *in English*, for the Aborigines to read, before H-bomb tests in the 1950s exemplifies this attitude.

This is the invasive transparency of the global knowledge economy. It does not work with the topology of the land, but appropriates and striates it. Hardt and Negri’s (2000) concept of *Empire* is characterized by a lack of boundaries and no territorial center of power. Nonetheless, it does bring together economic and political power that is realized in the supranational figure of the United Nations. So, although the new global knowledge economy does not necessarily have one sovereign nation-state as the center of power, it does present a new “global concert” of “permanent, eternal and necessary” political power that “maintains the social peace and produces its ethical truths” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. 10-11). In other words, the United Nations is the beginning of an Empire that projects a single supranational figure, an omnipresent, virtual power with the right to conduct “just wars” against those who threaten its world space and ethical order.

Makimoto and Manners (1997) discuss how, in advanced capitalist societies, nomadic practices are considered a threat. Nomads tend to be difficult to track, making them difficult to tax and control. Many governments see nomads as threats and some governments have discouraged nomadic lifestyles that have existed for thousands of years amongst aboriginal peoples. This much hackneyed threat to the new Empire; of running free of its global space and its ethical order, closely resembles Foucault’s (1978, p. 36) original analysis of the array of sexual practices and “casual pleasures” that exceeded canonical and civil law at the beginning of

the Nineteenth Century. These hitherto concealed, forbidden and aberrant sexualities were not suppressed, however, but instead rendered visible, made intelligible, so that they may be “normalized”. But, as Foucault points out, the power of such a juridical focus is fragile and the heterogeneous discourses on sexuality “can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hinderence, a stumbling-block, *a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy*” (Foucault, 1978, p. 101, emphasis added). In this way, perhaps, the hold of universalized globalization might be loosened also.

Munro (2002), for instance, draws from Manuel Castells’ work on the Zapatista guerrilla movement, who made political and revolutionary use of the Internet to facilitate *inter-networking* and to communicate their struggles to resist the most oppressive effects of globalization on behalf of some of the world’s poorest people. The relevance of the Zapatistas is that they challenge traditional revolutionary concepts about taking over the state. They struggle to achieve a democratic space without going on to seize power, as to do so would be to become caught in “a covert totalitarianism, imposing the authority of identity and inevitably aligning themselves with the counterrevolution” (Plant, 1993, p. 88). That is to say as soon as a revolutionary movement can be named, it will be reclaimed and identified not in its own terms but in those of the old structures to which it would henceforth belong (Plant, 1993).

This is the problem with the global knowledge economy. Far from embedding the freedom to choose and democratizing communication, as many neo-liberal commentators maintain, it has become simply a new and rapidly growing “phase of capitalist accumulation and commodification that accompanies the

contemporary realization of the world market” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 154). It is for this reason that Hardt and Negri (2000) align the characteristics of new supranational jurisdictions with the passage from modernity to postmodernity. It is also the predicament Deleuze and Guattari (1987) attempt to turn to our advantage with their configuration of “nomadology”.

NOMADOLOGY

The first important difference to be thought between the smooth space of the nomads and the striated space of the global knowledge economy is the way each treats mobility. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) nomads have *intensive* speed. They constitute a line of “absolute movement” that cannot clearly be identified, but which “constitutes the absolute character of the body, and whose irreducible parts (atoms) occupy or fill a smooth space in the manner of a vortex, with the possibility of springing up at any point” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 381). Conversely, in the global knowledge economy, almost every factor of production has “relative movement,” designating the *extensive* character not only of apparently material goods – money and technology – but also skills, information, knowledge, and labour power, to migrate from point to point. This distinction is between the modernist belief in movement-as-instrument: a here-there linearity that promotes progress, assimilation or appropriation, and the postmodern experience of movement-as-reality: a transitive, or indivisible continuity that is substance itself (Deleuze, 1991). This is not to say that the nomad is devoid of unity, but it is an active, continuous identity, “whose transitory nature is precisely the reason why s/he can make connections at all. Nomadic politics is a matter of bonding, of coalitions and of

interconnections” (Braidotti, 1994, p. 35). It is:

... a very special kind of distribution, one without division into shares, in a space without borders or enclosure. The nomos is the consistency of a fuzzy aggregate: it is in this sense that it stands in opposition to the law or the polis... (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 380, original emphasis)

The second important difference is one of organization/disorganization. “Nomadic organization is neither more primitive nor more evolved than the state apparatus or global capitalism, it is simply different” (Muecke, 1984, p. 26). The important point for Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 358) is that these mechanisms cannot be understood without abandoning the evolutionist idea that so-called “primitive” societies are “a rudimentary, less organized social form.” Chatwin (1998) illustrates a misunderstanding of this difference in the assumption that, because they were wanderers, Aborigines had no system of land tenure. “Aborigines, it was true, could not imagine territory as a block of land hemmed in by frontiers: but rather as an interlocking network of “lines” or “ways through” (Chatwin 1998, p. 56).

Compare, also, the terrorist network of al-Qaeda against the global power of the US and other western governments in the wake of the tragic attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the crashed airliner in Pennsylvania, of September 11th. A concern of the latter is the perpetuation and exertion of a “one worldness”, from which its hegemonic movements, situations, and confrontations arguably derive. Conversely, al-Qaeda, which has no geopolitical power base, is constantly in danger of being disavowed, abandoned by itinerant bodies, and is therefore animated by a very volatile fusion of alliances and

associations. This is not to say that the organization of al-Qaeda is any less thorough than in the West – nomadism is as much a scientific mode of living in the Steppes of Afghanistan, the streets of Lebanon, or the deserts of North Africa as corporate finance is in London or industrialism is in Detroit – but it is extremely different.

Putting to one side the ignobility of the events of September 11th for a moment, it seems perfectly *normal* that America should want to build a shield to *defend* itself and its friends from *rogue* states. But perceptions of “normal” require hard and clear distinctions between what is natural, good and just and what is abnormal, shocking or evil, whereas the events of September 11th occurred in the midst of ambiguity. When President Bush spoke on the evening of September 11th he declared:

... our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts ... Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror ... America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world ... Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature ... The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts ... We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them ... America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.

Clearly rogue states and nomadic lifestyles are seen as a threat to the unconstrained “freedom and opportunity” of America and

its allies to pursue their ends, a territorial principle, in which the US arguably deploys a powerful police function, that maintains the right to intervene in the territories of the weaker and less resourceful, the politically rebellious or the itinerant, on humanitarian grounds.

This is the ambiguity of globalization. On the one hand it is “a decentred and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open expanding frontiers” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. xii). On the other hand, far from eliminating traditional bases of power, it actually produces and reproduces them through “the unbounded terrain of its activities, the singularization and symbolic localization of its actions, and the connection of repressive action to all the aspects of the biopolitical structure of society” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 35). In other words, the global knowledge economy reduces freedom by imposing new structures that accumulate and distribute commodities, create needs, relate one to the other and organizes them into a global Empire. Is there an alternative? Is it possible to live outside this industrial-communicative control? Can there be a truly nomadic resistance to the global knowledge economy?

NOMAD RESISTANCE

Anti-capitalist demonstrators and the al-Qaeda network are only the most recent in a genealogy of guerrilla fighters to have configured the nomadic lifestyle into an effective field of social organizing. We are reminded here, historically, of the nomadic war of the Arab tribes against the Turks during WWI (Lawrence, 1935). T. E. Lawrence puts forward one of the most comprehensive treatises on guerrilla warfare, based on several principles or “pillars” of nomadic wisdom[1] that are

remarkably similar to the “resistances” to the global knowledge economy noted by Hardt and Negri (2000). Taken together, these briefly include:

1. operating from an unassailable base
2. enjoying autonomous movement
3. tactics of detachment and disengagement
4. a process of continuous speed
5. a collective ideal of freedom
6. recognizing the limits of leadership, and
7. the active constitution of democracy.

Let us focus on these nomadic resistances in more detail. First, despite the best efforts of Empire, insurgent revolutionary movements continue to undermine the globalization of social and economic relations. When these movements operate they do so beyond the ordered terrain of global capital. In a real sense “maximum disorder” is their “equilibrium” (Lawrence, 1935, p. 347). In effect these movements reside in an *unassailable base* in the uncoded, unorganized (from a Western State point of view), and unrestricted non-place beyond Empire. As Lawrence (1935, p. 198) points out, “as we wanted nothing material to live on, so we might offer nothing material to the killing.” By having nothing material to lose the nomad does not present a “biopolitical figure ... dressed in monetary clothing” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 32) but presents rather a deterritorialized resistance to Empire’s biopolitical boundaries. This difference is clearly visible in the aftermath of September 11th. There still seems no clear idea, for example, about what a “war on terrorism” involves. In fact Western journalists, frustrated at the

absence of any actual frontline in Afghanistan began to return home as early as October 6, 2001 (*The Economist*, 2001b). al-Qaeda is perhaps iconic of the nomad, omnipresent, yet with no clear territorial base and therefore difficult to locate and even more difficult to defeat. Forced to strike back to protect human rights and restore democracy and freedom, the West has found it difficult to know where to strike[2].

Second, because nomadic bands occupy these deterritorialized non-places they are able to decide if, when, and where to move. They continually create new spaces, establish new cooperations, and invent new modes of circulation. Hardt and Negri (2000, p. 397) describe this self-determination as *autonomous movement*, because it runs free of, and possibly counter to, the productive flows and mass redistributions of capital. Just as the al-Qaeda network appears more mobile and ubiquitous, its agents are also more instinctual and independent of bases and communications. Lawrence (1935, p. 345) points to the autonomy of camel raiding parties, which “self-contained like ships, might cruise confidently along the enemy’s cultivation-frontier, sure of an unhindered retreat into their desert element which the Turks could not explore.” He particularly recalls the condescension of a British Army officer who, having been informed the Arabs “would live on the country,” supposed they would “fight well hungry.” The British officer thought the desert “a poor country to live on,” Lawrence “called it very good” (Lawrence, 1935, p. 557). He likens the Turkish Army to plants, “immobile, firm rooted, nourished through long stems to the head,” whereas the Arab irregulars “might be a vapor, blowing where we listed” (Lawrence, 1935, p. 198).

Third, most wars are wars of contact, wars with fronts. The Arab uprising was an

irregular war of manoeuvre and movement, of *detachment and disengagement*, whose “best line was to defend nothing and to shoot nothing” (Lawrence, 1935, p. 201). These movements and habits of never engaging the enemy lay outside the comprehension of the immobile regulated State apparatus of the occupying Turks, whose hopeless lack of initiative made their army a “directed” one. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) draw the same comparisons in the context of the game theories of chess and “Go” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 352-353).

Chess is a game of State, played by a general and his staff. The pieces are coded, having intrinsic properties from which their movements, situations, and confrontations derive. They have fixed qualities and relative powers. Go is played by pellets, discs, simple arithmetic units that have only an unnamed, non-subjectified or third-person function. They have no intrinsic properties, except manoeuvre and movement. Go pellets have a function to contain, to shatter or to flank, “to contain the enemy by the silent threat of a vast unknown desert, not disclosing ourselves till we attacked” (Lawrence, 1935, p. 200). Chess pieces on the other hand have bi-univocal relations with each other and thus their functioning is structural and internal. Their spaces are therefore different. Chess, the game of State, is a war but it is a war of contact, a war with fronts. Go, the game of nomads, is a war of detachment and disengagement. Chess operates within a space that is striated. It is a space that is regulated, codified and sectioned. The board governs all movement. In Go, space is smooth for it is open and irregular and it is possible to spring up at any point, without departure or arrival, aim or destination.

The notions of mutability, ubiquity and independence of bases and

communications, make possible a fourth principle of nomadic resistance, a process of *continuous speed*. When allied to self-organization and autonomy, the continuous speed of new information and communication technology can be “reappropriated” (Hardt & Negri, 2000) by itinerant groups to constitute useful relationships and become powerful resistances. Carriers of biological viruses such as HIV, for example, have formed global support groups (Rackham, 2002). Simultaneously, open source software agreements make source code freely available to everyone. The *Linux* computer operating system can endlessly be copied and modified by software programmers to meet their individual hardware configurations, purposes and political agendas (Munro, 2002). Like a self-organizing system *Linux* has spread into a kind of global republic. Cooperative programmers replicate, refine and embed the *Linux* code by a process of decoding and recoding, in which literally anyone can become a carrier. Munro’s (2002) illustration of the Zapatista guerrillas, whose use of The Internet’s continual speed also challenges tidy divisions and blurs any singular distinction between economic war and information war.

Likewise, Lawrence’s Arab irregulars developed a highly mobile and highly equipped striking force. The nomad army “did not dung the earth richly with by-products” (Lawrence, 1935, p. 323) but was able to “use the smallest force in the quickest time at the farthest place” (Lawrence, 1935, p. 346). It formed “a line of variability” (Lawrence, 1935, p. 198), whose fluidity, speed and range ignored ground features or fixed directions, involved “tireless agitation and incessant revolt” (Lawrence, 1935, p. 344) and meant the enemy failed to estimate their number, “since even ourselves had not the smallest

idea of our strength at any given moment” (Lawrence, 1935, p. 390).

A fifth principle of nomad resistance involves the mobilization of a collective telos, or *ideal of freedom* (Hardt & Negri, 2000). The anti-globalisation movement, for example has developed anarchic tactics of guerrilla warfare aimed at blockading the summits, an active strategy in which everyone can take part following their own tactics, on condition that the telos and the limits of the action are commonly perceived. Böhm (2001) presents a montage of texts and quotations based on the Mayday anti-capitalism demonstrations. The sheer diversity of aims and tactics replace class/group based revolutionary strategies “to reveal a level in which they run wild in an unsystematised multitude and in disconnected moments and shifting components” (Plant, 1993, p. 88). Such nomadic tactics cast a line of flight “interrupting” the accumulation and commodification of global capital and toward “transitions between communicating states or experiences ... the affirmation of fluid boundaries” (Braidotti, 1994, pp. 5-6). This flexible cooperation also underpins Lawrence’s (1935) account. The ideal of freedom, held in common, “seemed to transcend the personal” (Lawrence 1935, p. 476). Consequently nomads have no discipline in the sense in which it was “restrictive, submergent of individuality” (Lawrence 1935, p. 347). As Lawrence continues: “Guerrillas must be allowed liberal workroom ... our ideal should be to make our battle a series of single combats, our ranks a happy alliance of agile commanders-in-chief” (Lawrence 1935, p. 348).

This situation also implicates a sixth principle: the *limits of designated leadership*. In the events following September 11th the West has tended to look toward individual commanders-in-chief

and key figures to take command and exercise "leadership." It is seen as important that they speak well, "balancing reassurance and resolve" (*The Economist*, 2001c, p. 11). Although bin Laden has been "a vital inspirational and managerial figure" for al-Qaeda (*The Economist*, 2001c, p. 11), its resources are unlikely simply to disappear with his demise. Nomadic networks, it seems, can always regroup and recover. An ideal, held in common, is a process of the mass, an element of the multitude and inapplicable to one individual. The Arab Army had no formal discipline; there was no subordination to an ideological programme. Arab motivations were clear, "service was active, always imminent." The Arab irregulars "were not soldiers, but pilgrims, intent always to go the little further" (Lawrence 1935, p. 522) and "loyalty became open eyed, not obedient" (Lawrence 1935, p. 476). To quote Lawrence (1935, p. 604) further:

The public often gave credit to generals because it had only seen the orders and the result ... that generals won battles: but no general ever truly thought so ... knowing how their inchoate ideas were discovered in application, and how their men, often not knowing, wrought them.

It is this principle, perhaps, that marks the difference between the certain movements of nomadic incursions and the tentative processes of normal war. Such self-organization also leads to a seventh and final principle, the active constitution of democracy. The constitution of democracy can be expressed as "an organization of productive and political power" that is "managed by the multitude, organized by the multitude, [and] directed by the multitude" (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 410). It is the organization of the open source software agreements of Linux and the

continuity of kinship community relationships of the Bedouin and tribal feuds of the Arab Army. Although designated leaders may be able to combine "loose showers of sparks into a firm flame," transforming a "series of unrelated incidents into a conscious operation" (Lawrence 1935, p. 223), it appears more strongly that adherence to a common ideal needs no personal followership or confirmatory esprit de corps, for the real kingdoms lie in each man's mind (Lawrence 1935).

CONCLUSION: THE PLAY OF SMOOTH SPACE

On the one hand the global knowledge economy appears to operate as an irreducible and immeasurable biopolitical force. It promises a liberating revolution for those corporate elites able to manipulate its digital communication technologies. For the majority, on the other hand, the speed of its action is experienced as an asymmetry between "extraterritorial" constraint and invasive control over their private times and "territorial" lives (Bauman, 1998). Furthermore, an analysis of nomad aesthetics throws critical light on the supposed heroic agency of high tech corporate executives. The argument put forward is that true nomadism is more about sustaining an active identity and continuous deterritorialization – a critical consciousness – that refuses to settle within established codes and conventions, than the extensive movement and consequent reterritorialization of new spaces and markets by self-styled corporate nomads. Drawing on classical and contemporary examples of nomadism versus the global processes of the knowledge economy, a theoretically speculative reconfiguration of organization has been put forward. Building on

traditional nomadic wisdom this agenda has the following features:

1. *An unassailable base* – which like Kublai Khan's empire has no intrinsic properties except those lying hidden in the mind; the smooth and empty deterritorialized space that is the non-place beyond Empire and requires a certain critical consciousness (absolute movement) to bring it to life;
2. *Autonomous movement* – movement away from a traditional, sedentary relation to the biopolitical power of late capitalism and towards more contemporary modes of self-organization;
3. *Detachment and disengagement* – the movements and habits of never engaging the enemy, so avoiding dominant mindsets and anticipated resistances, but with the function to shatter or to flank, to contain by silent threat;
4. *Continuous speed* – a line of flight that does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to another, but a transversal movement with the possibility of springing up at any point that sweeps one and the other away (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987);
5. *Ideal of freedom* – an active strategy engaging with people's ideals, fears, hopes and aspirations. Its importance lies in its common telos without any unity of object to serve as pivot. The ideal is essentially an unsystematised society of disconnected moments and

shifting components forged into a powerful multitude;

6. *Limits of leadership* – critical reflection on the cluster of attitudes, behaviors, values, abilities and beliefs that constitutes leaders as vital inspirational and managerial figures. A new focus on leadership as an emergent process held in common by a multitude;
7. *Democracy* – the organization of social encounters so as to encourage a process productive and political power that is managed and directed by the multitude.

In conclusion, the nomadic focus on collective, distributive, dispersed or relational movements and away from the formal hierarchies and relative movements of the global knowledge economy is timely within the mix of complexity, interdependence, and fragmentation that characterizes Empire. Far from changing traditional bases of power, the global knowledge economy continues to impose hegemonic control and influence. Within a climate of political, cultural and ideological diversity, nomadism offers a possible alternative.

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[2] Since Lord Butler's enquiry (*Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction*, HMSO HC 898, 14 July 2004) published its verdict in the UK, we now know that the reasons for ousting the "Beast of Baghdad" were not his development of weapons of mass destruction. We might conjecture that the real reason was that his regime existed outside the global economic control of Empire.

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