

A Call to the Army of Love and to the Army of Software

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Publication date

2011

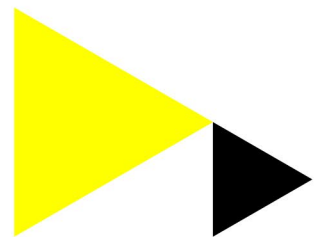
Document Version

Final published version

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Lovink, G. W., & Berardi, F. (2011). A Call to the Army of Love and to the Army of Software. Hogeschool van Amsterdam.

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A call to the Army of Love and to the Army of Software

By Franco Berardi and Geert Lovink

October 2011. The fight opposing financial dictatorship is erupting.

The so-called 'financial markets' and their cynical services are destroying the very foundations of social civilization. The legacy of the postwar compromise between the working class and progressive bourgeoisie has all but disappeared. Neoliberal policies are cutting back education and the public health system and is cancelling the right to a salary and a pension. The outcome will be impoverishment of large parts of the population, a growing precarity of labor conditions (freelance, short-term contracts, periods of unemployment) and daily humiliation of workers. The yet to be seen effect of the financial crisis will be violence, as people conjure up scapegoats in order to vent their rage. Ethnic cleansing, civil war, obliteration of democracy. This is a system we call financial Nazism: FINAZISM.

Right now people are fighting back in many places, and in many ways. Occupy Wall Street inspired a mass mobilization in New York that is extending across the USA every day. In Greece workers and students are squatting Syntagma square and protesting against the blackmail by the European Central Bank, which is devastating the country. Cairo, Madrid, Tel Aviv, the list of the 'movements of the squares' is proliferating. On October 15 cities across the globe will amass with people protesting against the systemic robbery.

Will our demonstrations and occupations stop the Finazist machine? They will not. Resistance will not resist, and our fight will not stop the legal crimes. Let's be frank, we will not persuade our enemies to end their predatory attacks ('let's make even more profit from the next downfall') for the simple reason that our enemies are not human beings. They are machines. Yes, human beings - corporate managers, stock owners, traders - are cashing the money that we are losing, and prey upon resources that workers produce. Politicians sign laws that deliver the lives of millions of people to the Almighty God of the Market.

Bankers and investors are not the real decision makers, they are participants in an economy of gestural confusion. The real process of predatory power has become automated. The transfer of resources and wealth from those who produce to those who do nothing except oversee the abstract patterns of financial transactions is embedded in the machine, in the software that governs the machine. Forget about governments and party politics. Those puppets who pretend to be leaders are talking nonsense. The paternalistic options they offer around 'austerity measures' underscore a rampant cynicism internal to party politics: they all know they lost the power to model finance capitalism years ago. Needless to say, the political class are anxious to perform the act of control and sacrifice social resources of the future in the form of budget cuts in order to 'satisfy the markets'. Stop listening to them, stop voting for them, stop hoping and cursing them. They are just pimps, and politics is dead.

What should we do? Living with the Finazist violence, bending to the arrogance of algorithms, accepting growing exploitation and declining salaries? Nope. Let's fight against Finazism because it is never too late. At the moment Finazism is winning for two reasons. First, because we have lost the pleasure of being together. Thirty years of precariousness and

competition have destroyed social solidarity. Media virtualization has destroyed the empathy among bodies, the pleasure of touching each other, and the pleasure of living in urban spaces. We have lost the pleasure of love, because too much time is devoted to work and virtual exchange. The large army of lovers have to wake up. Second, because our intelligence has been submitted to algorithmic power in exchange for a handful of shitty money and a virtual life. For a salary that is miserable when compared to the profits of the corporate bosses, a small army of 'softwarists' are accepting the task of destroying human dignity and justice. The small army of software programmers have to wake up.

There is only a way to awake the lover that is hidden in our paralyzed, frightened and frail virtualized bodies. There is only a way to awake the human being that is hidden in the miserable daily life of the softwarist: take to the streets and fight. Burning banks is useless, as real power is not in the physical buildings, but in the abstract connection between numbers, algorithms and information. But occupying banks is good as a starting point for the long-lasting process of dismantling and rewriting the techno-linguistic automatons enslaving all of us. This is the only politics that counts. Some say that the Occupy Wall Street movement lacks clear demands and an agenda. This remark is ridiculous. As in the case of all social movements the political backgrounds and motives are diverse, even diffuse and quite frequently contradictory. The occupation movement would not be better off with more realistic demands.

What is thrilling right now is the multiplicity of new connections and commitment. But what is even more exciting is finding ways that can set in motion the collective 'exodus' from the capitalist agony. Let's not talk about the 'sustainability' of the movement. That's boring. Everything is transient. These fast-burning events do not help us to overcome the daily depression. Occupying the squares and other public spaces is a way to respond to the short duration of the demonstrations and marches. We are here to stay.

We are not demanding a reform of the global financial system or the ECB. The return to national currencies of the past, as requested by the rightwing populists, will not make ordinary citizens less vulnerable to currency speculation. A return to state sovereignty is not the solution either, and many people already sense this. The demand for more 'intervention', control and oversight of markets is a hopeless gesture. The real issue is that humans are no longer in charge. We need to dismantle the machines themselves. This can be done in a very peaceful manner. Hack into their system, publish their crimes through Wikileaks-type initiatives and then delete their real-time trading killing networks for good.

Financial markets are all about the politics of speed and deterritorialization. But we know their architectures and vulnerabilities. The financial world has lost its legitimacy. There is no global consensus anymore that the 'market' is always right. And this is our chance to act. The movement has to respond at this level. Decommissioning and re-programming financial software is not the dream of a Luddite sabotaging the machine. 'Market regulation' will not do the job, only autonomy and the self-organization of software workers can dismantle the predatory algorithms and create self-empowering software for society.

The general intellect and the erotic social body have to meet on the streets and squares, and united they will break the Finazist chains.