Nomad Leadership and the Corporate War Machine

Abstract

Digital technology and software networks enable large numbers of people to work wherever and whenever they wish and to choose between a sedentary or nomadic lifestyle. Whatever the economic benefits for companies to work in this way, however, there is more to nomadism than the technical ability to live and work on the go. Global capital, no less than nomadic bands or packs, deploys itself in every direction and appears to operate as an irreducible war machine – a pure and immeasurable relation of becoming. It does so, however in ways that also constitute and colonise, so as to render new territories fixed, homogenous, and more easily controlled. How then can true nomadic movement be differentiated from the extended organisation of global capitalism? This paper illustrates important epistemological differences between the ‘determinarisation’ of nomadic movement and the ‘reterritorialisation’ of capital migration. It argues that the organisation of global capital is expressed through constant relations of power distribution and formalised authority. Conversely the nomadic war machine, is a complex, dynamic relation characterised by its immediacy and continuous variation of alliance and resistance, that remains difficult to locate and even more difficult to defeat. The paper concludes that the nomad aesthetic is the important opening of a new field for our conceptualisation of leadership in the 21st century.
Nomad Leadership and the Corporate War Machine

He don't plan 'tatos
Don't plant cotton
Them that plants them is soon forgotten
But old man river he just keeps rollin' along

(Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus)

We reminded one another that movement was the law of strategy,
and started moving

(T.E. Lawrence, Seven Pillars of Wisdom)

Introduction

Modern electronic communications of sequence connections and creative configurations 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, email, electronic positioning devices, and software networks 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 organisations 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 in contemporary organisations, this view too has limits. Computer networks ‘transform organisations from gatherings of people under the same roof to networks of electronically connected individuals, as well as inter-organisational alliances’ (Tsoukas, 1992: 443). They do so, however, only within the established structures and systems of contemporary global capital. These demand the regularisation 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.

An important difference to consider, therefore, is between the ‘deterritorialising’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) movement of nomadic relations and the ‘reterritorialising’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) accumulation and commodification of contemporary capital. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) express the technical, economic and social conditions of the latter as a concrete geo-political apparatus of the sovereign State. One complicating factor, however, is that deterritorialisation also appears to have become a powerful tool available to global capital and world markets (Hardt and Negri, 2000). According to Hardt and Negri the global system of capital constantly deploys itself in every direction to constitute and appropriate new territories. Worldwide organisations, no less than nomadic bands or packs, tend to deconstruct the boundaries of nation states and
operate as irreducible war machines – pure and immeasurable relations of becoming – very different from the traditional institutionalised and striated view of the State. How then can true nomadic movement be differentiated from the migration of global capitalism?

The point of this paper is first of all to explore these two different modes of organising. Second, extending from Hardt and Negri’s (2001) understanding of ‘Empire,’ it argues that contemporary organisation lies increasingly within the rational administrative control of a new supranational ‘State apparatus,’ a kind of organisation ‘sans frontiers’. Circulation, mobility, and rebellion, for example, continue to be checked by an invasive ‘biopower’ that regulates social life from its interior; a distributed authority that achieves an effective regulation over the population by becoming an essential part of social life, produced and reproduced by every individual. Third, utilizing Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) ‘nomadology,’ organising is reconstituted as a ‘politics of deteritorialised flows across a smooth world’ (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 142) with no clear territorial base. The paper concludes that the nomad aesthetic is the important opening of a new field for our conceptualisation of leadership and organisation in the 21st century.

The Age of Corporate Nomadism?

According to Colazzo and Zeni (2001) university researchers constitute a community of ‘intellectual nomads’ whose members can be in any place, at any moment. They hold the idea of a localised group of researchers in a single place to be superfluous. Researchers often work far from other places, especially when they are not in teaching time. Furthermore, Colazzo and Zeni argue, these new circumstances are due mainly to new, high tech ways of communicating and increasing speeds for exchanging information, where electronic circuits evoke new patterns of interconnectedness. Makimoto and Manners (1997: 5) also 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.’ In their book Digital Nomad, they explore the new potential for nomadism and cite 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 traveling 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 of social, technological and communicational changes that will transform organisations 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 favourable regulatory regime the lowest tax rates, the most obliging financiers, the most willing workforces (Makimoto and Manners, 1997: 59).
Now, it is probably true that for top executives the nomadic lifestyle is an attractive (and fashionable) alternative. Interim executives, for example, enjoy the gipsy lifestyle, and have the skills to step into the breach as ‘crisis managers’ and handle one-off events such as 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. Being a ‘citizen of the world’ 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, isn’t 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 20th 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 (Economist, 2001b). 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. Companies 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 simultaneity 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: 63) is similarly critical of what he calls the ever-increasing transparency or ‘normative socialisation’ and ‘universal conditioning’ of the state. He sees the very transparency of modern social organisation as a threat. The increasing reliance on electronic connectivity, he argues, must logically occasion a ‘technological purification’ of individuals, whose life becomes an open book to all those who have the desire and capability to monitor. The ‘Mondex’ electronic credit card system, itemised 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.

A second concern with the corporate nomad is that the image of the nomad executive represents a return to the heroic agency attributed to transformational, charismatic and visionary individuals highlighted in prevailing conceptions of leadership (Gronn, 2002). 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: 31). This view represents a dominant, 'seductive game' (Calás and Smircich, 1991) of performative leadership, in which leaders are seen as extant causal agents rather than as parts of ongoing social networks and institutional structures: it is leaders who set a vision for the future, leaders who are action-orientated and intellectually flexible, leaders who drive for results, leaders who inspire and motivate others to work with them …, etc. 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 characterises 21st Century organisations.

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: 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: 16) ‘nomadism consists not so much in being homeless, as in being capable of creating your home everywhere.’ The nomadism in question 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: 5).

From Metropolis to Terra Incognita

The argument being put forward here is that corporate nomads do not necessarily move from one company to another, ‘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 organisation and territories’ (Plant 1993: 92). In this case, the new breed of nomad executive is, perhaps, more like a migrant. The migrant leaves one company, never to return, and then tries to ‘territorialise’ (Deleuze ans Guattari, 1988) or ‘take charge of the problem,’ in another company. As Deleuze and Guattari, (1988: 381) point out:

Whereas the migrant leaves behind a milieu that has become amorphous or hostile, 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.
It is in this sense that nomadic space (Figure 1, left) is smooth, unlimited, undivided, 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.

Figure 1: Smooth and Striated Space  
(source: http://www.terraserver.homeadvisor.msn.com)

Conversely, the metropolitan space (Figure 1, right) is criss-crossed with vertical and horizontal grid squares. It is a striated space with deep pillars and parallel lines. It is a codified space, an ordered space, one that, in Deleuze and Guattari’s language, ‘territorialises’ or divides the ‘exterior,’ and 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 and Guattari, 1988: 386).

The 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 the 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 extensions made to 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 ‘smooth and empty’ squares of 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 possess 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.

Likewise, for the Aborigines, Australia is not simply divided into eight states or territories, it is criss-crossed with symbolic tracks made of songs, which tell of the creation of the land (Chatwin, 1998; Muecke, 1984). Known to Caucasians as ‘songlines’, the labyrinths of invisible pathways meander all over Australia. They are delineated neither by state or territory boundaries and have the character of what Mol and Law (1994) term ‘fluid spaciality’. In the fluid space of the songlines there are no clear boundaries it is not possible to distinguish one place as being separate from another. In theory, the whole of Australia is connected through totemic song.

**Capital Migration and Nomadic Deterritorialisation**

The nomad is, therefore, a cartographer, able to read invisible maps. A problem occurs, however, when the State or contemporary capital wants to ‘territorialise’ or bound these invisible lines. Specifically, the problem is where to draw the boundaries. How to survey 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: 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: 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 territorialisation of global capital. It does not work with the topology of the land, but appropriates and straits it. Hardt and Negri’s (2000) concept of Empire is characterised by a lack of boundaries and no territorial centre 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 Empire does not necessarily have one sovereign nation-state as the centre 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 and Negri, 2000: 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. Likewise, Makimoto and Manners (1997) discuss how, in advanced capitalist societies, 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.

The threat to the new global Empire of running free of world space and its ethical order is close to Marcuse’s (1964) argument that rampant consumerism denies the ability for critical thinking in advanced capitalist societies. Marcuse’s critique of a one-dimensional universe of thought and behaviour is currently being played out in anti-global capital demonstrations that have taken place in recent years. Munro (2001), for instance, draws from Manuel Castells’ work on the Zapatista guerrilla movement, who made political and revolutionary use of information technology, to resist the most oppressive effects of globalisation 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 do not advocate the seizure of power, for this logic becomes caught in ‘a covert totalitarianism, imposing the authority of identity and inevitably aligning themselves with the counterrevolution’ (Plant, 1993: 88). That is to say as soon as a 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, according to Hardt and Negri (2000), is the problem with postmodernism. Far from a radical voice of dissent and revolution it has become simply ‘a new phase of capitalist accumulation and commodification that accompanies the contemporary realization of the world market (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 154). It is for this reason that they align the characteristics of the new supranational juridical order with the passage from modernity to postmodernity. It is also the predicament Deleuze and Guattari (1988) attempt to turn to our advantage with their ‘nomadology.’

**Nomad Aesthetics**

The first important difference to be thought between the smooth space of the nomads and the straited space of the sovereign State, or global capital, is the way each treats mobility. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1988) nomads have *intensive* speed. They constitute a line of ‘absolute movement,’ which cannot clearly be identified, but ‘constitutes the absolute character of the body, 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 and Guattari, 1988: 381). Conversely, in the global system of capital, 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: 35)
The *nomos* … 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 and Guattari, 1988: 380, original emphasis).

The importance of this difference is the attention it draws to collective mechanisms of organisation seen in certain clan societies. According to Hittis (1996) clan organisation is the basis of ancient Bedouin society. Each tent represents a family, each encampment of tents constitutes a clan. Several clans group together to make a tribe. Each member of the clan considers each other as being of the same blood whose common spirit demands boundless and unconditional loyalty. These relationships form the cohesive element of tribal organisation. A sheikh, the senior member of the tribe, represents the clan. The sheikh is not the absolute authority, however, but must consult with a tribal council. The Sheikh’s tenure of office is therefore importantly dependent on the goodwill of the tribe (Hitti 1996).

Although the nomad enjoys a common spirit of boundless and unconditional loyalty, devotion to the common good goes no further than his tribe. According to Hittis (1996) individualism is deeply ingrained in the Bedouin. University researchers too tend to be hardcore individualists. This does not exclude the possibility of co-operating in order to reach shared objectives, but throughout their collaboration they remain competitive. As Colazzo and Zeni (2001) point out, intellectual nomads are opposed to the traditional co-operative person, they are more like mediaeval cavaliers who challenge each other in a tournament with predefined rituals and rules, which actually force them to co-operate and respect their colleagues, but this is only a result of the complex and contradictory mixture of feelings. It may well be that kinship and friendship are more effective than leadership for the nomad (Munro, 2002).

The second important difference is one of organisation/disorganisation. ‘Nomadic organisation is neither more primitive nor more evolved than the state apparatus or global capitalism, it is simply different’ (Muecke, 1984: 26). The important point for Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 358) is that these mechanisms cannot be understood without abandoning the evolutionist idea that so-called ‘primitive’ societies are ‘a rudimentary, less organised social form.’ Chatwin (1998) illustrates a misunderstanding of this difference in the assumption that, because they were wanderers, Aboriginals had no system of land tenure. ‘Aboriginals, 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: 56). There is good reason for this, Chatwin (1998: 56/113, original emphasis) continues:

Most of Outback Australia was arid scrub or desert where rainfall was always patchy and where one year of plenty might be followed by several years of lean. To move in such landscapes was survival: to stay in the same place suicide. The definition of a man’s “own country” was “the place in which I do not have to ask”. Yet to feel “at home” in that country depended on being able to leave it. Everyone hoped to have at least four “ways out”, along which he could travel in a
crisis. … Territory is not necessarily the place you fruit in, it’s the place in which you stay … where you know every nook and cranny … where you know by heart every refuge … where you are invincible to the pursuer.

Compare, also, the nomadic war machine of al-Qaeda against the institutionalised State power of the US and other western governments in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Centre, the Pentagon, and the crashed airliner in Pennsylvania, of September 11th. A concern of the latter is the perpetuation and exertion of its worldwide hegemonic role from which its regular movements, situations, and confrontations 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 organisation of al-Qaeda is any less thorough than in the US State – 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 industrialism is in Detroit (Hittis, 1996) – but it is different.

From Twenty Four Seven to Nine Eleven

Let us briefly consider the attacks of September 11 to illustrate how ingrained, at least in our thinking, these differences between the nomos and the polis appear to be, and, further, how the hegemony of the western powers continues to marginalize the nomadic ‘other,’ by turning it into a nightmarish spectre. That the attacks had a shattering impact is testimony, perhaps, to the apparent separation between the digitized, virtual societies of the First World and the Third World ‘desert of the real’ (Zizek, 2002: 232). Zizek’s point is that prior to the WTC explosions we lived inside an artificially constructed world, perceiving Third World horrors as ‘Unreal,’ something that happened elsewhere, outside, and, as such, not actually part of our ‘Real.’ The impact of the images of the WTC collapse had the nightmarish effect of actually making the unreal real. The symbolic importance of the WTC collapse is not the assault on the centre of late modern capitalism but in our reaction to it, our sudden awareness that the assumed separateness between ‘us’ from ‘them’ had been transgressed. More particularly, our reaction is to turn ‘them’ into ‘an irrational abstract other,’ to try and remake them as ‘unreal,’ as ‘the pure evil outside’ (Zizek, 2002: 233).

It is precisely this image that informs the ideological reappropriations by the West in the aftermath of the tragedy. The Economist magazine for example, has carried a revealing series of leaders, commentaries and articles in its pages since the attacks of September 11th. Not surprisingly, The Economist speaks with the authoritarian voice of the West. Commentators draw parallels between the ‘thousands of innocents’ (Economist, 2001a) dead and Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, which brought America into the second world war. Interestingly little attention is paid to past and present US policies such as the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, which also inflicted enormous civilian casualties, and is, arguably, an equally justified comparison, or else, America’s unilateral support for Israel’s response to murders, despite the fact that Palestinians also continue to die in Gaza city. Other commentaries in the series state how it is ‘impossible for normal people to put themselves into the minds of the sort who planned or carried out
last year’s slaughter’ (Economist, 2002a: 11, emphasis added). Normal here again indicates the western hegemony: the primacy of democracy, the defence of freedom and the protection of human rights. Furthermore, Silvio Berlusconi, Italy’s prime minister, reportedly characterised the “superiority of Christianity” and pointed to the need to “occidentalise” the Middle East (Economist, 2001d). Whilst such views may be extreme and not popularly supported throughout the West, a definite propaganda to establish American sovereignty and simultaneously demonise the terrorist ‘other’ characterizes much of The Economist’s reportage. Some of these right/wrong characterizations are juxtaposed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: The Economist’s Propaganda War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Fanatical Terrorist Other</th>
<th>American Sovereign State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appalling atrocities; slaughter</td>
<td>Justified defensive shield; national security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruel and shocking</td>
<td>Retaliation; the right to strike back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network of Conspirators; meticulous planning</td>
<td>Vulnerable alliances and commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No value to human life</td>
<td>Pearl Harbour 1941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murderous; unscrupulous ‘axis of evil’</td>
<td>Punishment; Crusade; Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorists</td>
<td>‘war against terror’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supranational Muslim entity</td>
<td>Nation states; The need to ‘occidentalise’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frighten</td>
<td>Resolve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abominable crime</td>
<td>Innocents under siege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentred leader</td>
<td>Exercising leadership with credit; patient determination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, the patriotic symbolism of three firefighters raising the American flag at Ground Zero (Figure 2, below right) compares with earlier images of US Marines raising the American flag on the Pacific Island of Iwo Jima in 1945 (Figure 2, below left). Referencing American Exceptionalism by Seymour Martin Lipset an Economist special report (2002b: 25) quotes 80% of Americans consider their country better than any other. The article continues that, even before September 11th, ‘Americans were easily the most patriotic nation in the world’ (Economist, 2002b: 25). It cites 86% as being very proud of their country compared to only 54% of Britons and 35% of the French. This position is further endorsed by the Economist’s assertion that, in the modern world, ‘we are fortunate that there is one great superpower, dominant militarily and strong economically, which no other country or alliance of countries at present feels inclined to confront in war (2001e: 11).
Figure 2: Patriotic Images of the American Flag

Extending from this patriotic imagery, the Economist states ‘it is hard to see why America should be prevented from building a shield to defend itself and its friends from rogue states’ (Economist, 2001a:14). In short, to be ‘normal’ is to possess a territory and have the authority to defend it. Rogue states and nomadic lifestyles are seen as a threat to the ‘normalcy’ of the new world order, in which the US arguably deploys a powerful police function, with the right to intervene in the territories of the rebellious or the itinerant on humanitarian grounds. In the light of the tragic events of September 11th and the subsequent campaign first against Afghanistan and now Iraq, it is worth quoting a prophetic passage from Hardt and Negri (2000: 37 emphasis added) at length:

Moral intervention often serves as the first act that prepares the stage for military intervention. In such cases military deployment is presented as an internationally sanctioned police action. Today military intervention is progressively less a product of decisions that arise out of the old international order or even U.N. structures. More often it is dictated unilaterally by the United States, which charges itself with the primary task and then subsequently asks its allies to set in motion a process of armed containment and/or repression of the current enemy of Empire. These enemies are most often called terrorist, a crude conceptual and terminological reduction that is rooted in a police mentality.

This is the paradox of the war machine of Empire. On the one hand it is ‘a decentred and deterrioralising apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open expanding frontiers’ (Hardt and Negri, 2000: xii). On the other hand, far from eliminating territorial centres 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 and Negri, 2000: 35). In other words, Empire
imposes a new structure that accumulates and distributes commodities, creates needs, relates one to the other and organizes them into a new global order of economic and social relations. Is there an alternative? Is it possible to live outside Empire? Can there be a truly nomadic resistance to its globalised economic-industrial-communicative machine?

Nomad Wisdom Versus the Imperial War Machine

Putting to one side the ignobility of the events of September 11th, for a moment, I want to suggest the broader nomad aesthetic as a potential new field for conceptualising leadership and organisation in the 21st century. Anti-capitalist demonstrators and the al-Qaeda network are only the most recent in a genealogy of guerrilla fighters to have transformed the nomadic lifestyle, literally into an effective war machine. We are reminded here, perhaps, 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 that are remarkably similar to the ‘resistances’ to Empire 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 globalisation 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: 347). In effect these movements reside in an unassailable base in the uncodified, unorganised, and unrestricted non-place beyond Empire. As Lawrence (1935: 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 and Negri, 2000: 32) but presents rather a deterritorialised resistance to Empire’s biopolitical boundaries. This difference is clearly visible in the aftermath of September 11th. There 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, began to return home as early as October 6, 2001 (Economist, 2001d). Forced to strike back to protect human rights and restore democracy and freedom, the West is finding it difficult to know where to strike. Al-Qaeda is perhaps iconic of the nomad machine, omnipresent, yet with no clear territorial base. Difficult to locate and even more difficult to defeat.

Second, because nomadic bands occupy these deterritorialised 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: 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: 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: 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 vapour, blowing where we listed’ (Lawrence, 1935: 198).

Third, most wars are wars of contact, wars with fronts. The Arab uprising was an irregular war of manoeuvres and movement, of *detachment and disengagement*, whose ‘best line was to defend nothing and to shoot nothing’ (Lawrence, 1935: 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 (1988) draw the same comparisons in the context of the game theories of chess and ‘Go.’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 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, disks, simple arithmetic units that have only an unnamed, nonsubjectified 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: 200). Chess pieces on the other hand have biunivocal 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-organisation and autonomy, the continuous speed of new information and communication technology can be ‘reappropriated’ (Hardt and Negri, 2000) by itinerent 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-organising 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 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, highly equipped striking force. The nomad army ‘did not dung the earth richly with by-products (Lawrence, 1935: 323) but was able to ‘use the smallest force in the quickest time at the farthest place (Lawrence, 1935: 346). It formed ‘a line of variability’ (Lawrence, 1935: 198), whose fluidity, speed and range ignored ground features or fixed directions, involved ‘tireless agitation and incessant revolt (Lawrence, 1935: 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: 390).

A fifth principle of nomad resistance involves the mobilization of a collective telos, or ideal of freedom (Hardt and Negri, 2000). The anti-global capital 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 un-systematised multitude and in disconnected moments and shifting components’ (Plant, 1993: 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: 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: 476). Consequently nomads have no discipline in the sense in which it was ‘restrictive, submergent of individuality (Lawrence 1935: 347). As Lawrence continues: ‘Guerrillas must be allowed liberal work room … 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: 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 24 November, 2001: 11). Although bin Laden has been ‘a vital inspirational and managerial figure’ for al-Qaeda (The Economist 24 November, 2001: 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: 522) and ‘loyalty became open eyed, not obedient’ (Lawrence 1935: 476). To quote Lawrence (1935: 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-organisation also leads to a seventh and final principle, the active constitution of democracy. The constitution of democracy can be expressed as ‘an organisation of productive and political power’ that is ‘managed by the multitude, organised by the multitude, [and] directed by the multitude’ (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 410). It is the organisation 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: 223), it appears more strongly that adherence to a common ideal needs no personal followership or confirmatory espirit de corps, for the real kingdoms lie in each man’s mind (Lawrence 1935).

This then is the theoretically speculative case for ‘next generation’ leadership and organisation research: to extend the current understanding of leadership and organisation processes by stimulating nomadic thinking that continually challenges us to reexamine and revise our strategic and operational presuppositions.

**Conclusion: ‘Next Generation’ Leadership Research**

Write to the nth power, the n-1 power, write with slogans: Make rhizomes not roots, never plant! Don’t sow, grow offshoots! Don’t be one or be multiple, be multiplicities!
Run lines, never plot a point. Speed turns the point into a line! Be quick even when standing still! Line of chance, line of hips, line of flight. Don’t bring out the general in you! Don’t have just ideas, just have an idea (Godard). Have short term ideas. Make maps, not photos or drawings. Be the Pink Panther and your loves will be like the wasp and the orchid, the cat and the baboon

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 24-25)

On the one hand the global system of capital appears to operate as an irreducible and immeasurable biopolitical force. It promises a liberatory revolution for those corporate nomads able to manipulate its digital communication technologies. For many people, on the other hand, the transparency of the new biopolitical Empire is experienced as increased ‘police’ constraint and invasive control over their private times and personal lives. 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 deterritorialisation – a critical consciousness – that refuses to settle within established codes and conventions, than the extensive movement and consequent reterritorialisation of new spaces and markets by self-styled corporate nomads. Drawing on classical and contemporary examples of nomadism versus global systems of capital and biopolitical power, a theoretically speculative agenda for researching leadership and organisation in the 21st Century is 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 deterritorialised 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-organisation;

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 and Guattari, 1988);

5. *Ideal of freedom* – an active strategy engaging with peoples’ ideals, fears, hopes and aspirations. Its importance lies in its common telos without and 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, behaviours, 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 identities and away from the conventional perspective of leadership as causal agency, is timely within the climate of complexity, interdependence, and fragmentation that characterises 21st Century organisations. On the traditional view, the dominant unit of analysis continues to be the deeds of individual leaders, as the sole transformational or
charismatic influence. Within a climate of political, cultural, and ideological diversity such leadership may prove to be of limited applicability. Zizek (2002) recalls the anecdote of the madman who searches for a lost key beneath a streetlamp; asked why there, when he lost the key in a dark corner somewhere, he answers: “But it’s easier to search under strong light!” In other words, because leadership is a complex mechanism of immanent relations, it is easier to look for it in designated leaders. Leaders however, are not discrete individuals, nor are they independent of any system of social relations. Understood thus, the attribution of leadership characteristics seems to be simply a retrospective construction. What a nomadic aesthetic offers is a prospective alternative.

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